

## 2 Timothy 1

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[0:00] Turn, if you will, to 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy, which is on page 995. We're going to spend four weeks in this book, partly in thinking about Andrew and Ruben coming on board.

! I've kind of gone back to 2 Timothy on what are the priorities that should dominate us as a church family. It's a book that you could spend like years preaching through.

2 Timothy, and I'm not going to do that. I'm going to try and give you the big picture over four weeks. And if you want the key to the book, it's verse 14 of chapter 1, where Paul says to Timothy, By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to us.

There's a famous preacher in London called F.B. Meyer, whose books became very popular. And F.B. Meyer was in his last illness, and he asked his doctor, who was a personal friend, How long have I got?

The doctor said, well, just a couple of hours. You should be dead by 4 o'clock. Doesn't say much for his bedside manner, does it? Apparently, F.B. Meyer turned over and went to sleep. He awoke with a start at 6 p.m. in the evening and looked at his bedside clock and said, Goodness me, I should have been gone hours ago.

[1:17] If you knew that you only had a couple of hours or a couple of days left, how would you cope with that? Who would you want to email?

What would you need to say if you knew that your time here in this world was coming to an end? And that's the occasion of 2 Timothy.

Paul is writing to his younger colleague in ministry, Timothy. It's his last letter. He's in prison. You've heard the expression that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. And it's around then, about AD 64, according to tradition, Nero set fire to Rome.

He had an ambitious building project. And he wanted to clear from the city some of the slums. And so he set fire to Rome. And of course, there was a massive outcry. And Emperor Nero blamed the Christians.

And so as a result of that, the first official Roman persecution broke out. That's the background to 2 Timothy. It's that sort of time. The Apostle Paul is arrested.

[2:25] And he's no stranger to prison life. He was a repeat offender when it came to telling people about Jesus. But this time, he knows he's not coming out. He's on death row.

The executioner is sharpening his blade. And he knows what's going to happen. And when you know that you're going to die tomorrow, it wonderfully concentrates the mind, Samuel Johnson said. And the Apostle Paul knew that he'd die. And so what's he concerned about? What's on his mind? It's not the fact that he is going to lose his head.

What he's concerned about is that the world doesn't lose the chance to hear the gospel. So he writes to Timothy and he says, verse 14, Guard the gospel. Guard the good deposit entrusted to you with the help of the Holy Spirit.

And 2 Timothy is going to tell us how we do that as a church. How do you preserve the gospel after we're dead and gone? How do we make sure that the gospel continues to advance long after we're not here anymore?

[3:34] And there's lots of things to help us. Three things in this chapter. To make sure that the gospel will advance in healing long after we're dead and gone. So the first thing that Paul does is this.

Is he reminds Timothy of his legacy in the Lord. Can you see that in verses 3 to 7? He reminds Timothy of his legacy in the Lord. Up to now, Christianity has been a sort of protected religion. Christians were regarded as a strange kind of Jews, a Jewish sect. And Judaism, well, was a protected religion in the Roman Empire. But all that's about to change with the first official

persecution of the church.

And Paul is in prison and he's on death row. Not as a Jewish rabbi, but he's there as a Christian.

And Christians are being blamed. They're very much in the public eye.

And Paul is on trial because he is a Christian. And it's very interesting how he speaks about that.

Look at what he says about his life in ministry. Look at verse 3. He says, I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience.

[ 4 : 41 ] Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, I'm not a cult leader. I'm not involved in some new fad. Some new heresy called Christianity. Jesus is not some Johnny-come-lately Messiah.

He's saying, this is the fulfillment of what was promised to my ancestors. To my forefathers. To Abraham. To Isaac. And to Jacob. And to you and I as well.

As well as Timothy. We stand at the back of a long line of believers. Stretching right to the patriarchs of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

He's saying the Old Testament is our book. Judaism is our heritage. We're not disconnected from that. And that's what I think Paul means when he speaks of his ancestors.

That is our legacy. And you notice he goes on to speak about this legacy. This heritage that Timothy was connected to. Look at verse 3. He says, I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day.

[ 5 : 49 ] I remember with my tears. Your tears. I long to see you. And then verse 4. He says, I'm reminded of your sincere faith. A faith that dwelt first in your mother. In your grandmother Lois.

And your mother Eunice. And it seems, doesn't it, from a cursory reading. I don't think it's fair to say it. That Timothy is a bit of a mummy's boy. His father isn't around.

He's overprotected by his mum. And he believes the same thing as his granny. And at first reading.

I think it seems to confirm people's prejudices about Christianity.

When I was in Cardiff. Living in Cardiff. I went to a church on quite a rough estate. And the minister liked us to do door to door.

He used to hate it. You know, you'd kind of knock the door as quietly as you could. Praying that no one would answer it. And it was terrifying. And there were some pretty difficult characters on that estate.

[ 6 : 51 ] And often after knocking it as quietly as I could. And kind of edging myself to the gate. The door would open. And there'd be some terrifying bloke covered in tattoos. Wearing a vest. And I would say, well, we're from the church.

Just around the corner. And he would say, I'll get the wife. Or he'd say, I'll send the kids to Sunday school. Well, it was a standard response.

Because it's not for me. For the women and children. And here's Timothy. And Paul mentions his mom and his grandma. But there's no mention of his dad. It just confirms people's prejudices.

Those little chapels that I grew up in. Full of old women and children. It's old fashioned. It's out of date. It's something from a bygone age. And so, here's the Apostle Paul congratulating Timothy on having the same faith as his granny.

It's a bit oldie worldie, isn't it? Surely we need something a little bit more up to date than that. We've grown out of all that Christianity. Wasn't Timothy a little bit of a wimp, really?

[ 8 : 06 ] Timothy, timid. Timothy's dad doesn't seem to be around. He's overprotected by his mom. Spoiled by his granny. It just confirms people's worst suspicions. Now, if that's the impression you get, it's a very unfair impression.

That Timothy is one of those weak, dependent sort of creatures. A bit inadequate. But people say that to me. I'm sure they say to you, well, I'm really glad it helps you.

It's a really good thing, good church. I'm really glad you're into that. I don't need that sort of thing. I don't need a crutch. Christianity, it's okay for the weak and the feeble-minded.

But it's irrelevant to me. Now, you could read it like that. I think you'd be wrong to read it like that. You'd be making a real mistake, a profound mistake if you did, if you abandoned Christianity because of that.

But I want you to notice that Paul is very positive about Timothy's background. Paul says, I thank God when I think about your heritage.

[ 9 : 13 ] I thank God for your upbringing. I thank God for your mother and for your grandmother. For those godly women, Lois and Eunice. Paul is overwhelmed with thankfulness for them.

Even before his conversion. If you look at chapter 3 and verse 15, don't you love it? These women, they taught him, didn't they? They taught him how from childhood you've been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through Jesus Christ.

And Paul says, I thank God for that. I thank God for this godly heritage and so should you. And why is that so important? It's so important because one of the ways that the gospel is preserved in the church and in the world, one of the ways that the gospel advances in society, and how the gospel is entrusted to generations, so that long after you and I are dead and buried and gone, the gospel is entrusted by mums and dads, by grandmas and granddads, passing the gospel on to their children. And Paul is saying the gospel will not die out with us. It was here long before we arrived and it will be here long after we're gone. And that's what Paul is saying here.

You want to see the gospel advance in healing? You want to see the gospel continue after your day? Here's the application. Leave a legacy, start a dynasty. Leave a legacy, start a dynasty.

[10:50] And that's one of the ways the gospel is preserved in the world. Every single one of us here is a product to some degree of our upbringing. It's one of the marks isn't ever good biography.

A good biography doesn't start with the subject. It takes you back to the parents or the grandparents and you see how that individual fits into his background or heritage. Every family here has got some kind of history.

And what a blessing, what a great privilege it is to be brought up in a believing home. What a privilege it is to belong to a covenant family.

And so if you're from a Christian home and that's your background and if you're a child growing up in a Christian home this morning do not be embarrassed by that.

Thank God for that. Your parents are not perfect by any stretch of anyone's imagination. And yet it is an amazing privilege that God has granted you in his sovereignty to allow you to be born into a covenant family.

[12:03] And that is a wonderful thing. And do not squander that. And do not walk away from that. So can I say this as well?

Mums and dads, what a wonderful thing that is. The world discounts in some ways what it is to be a mother or a grandmother in lots of ways.

But it is a high, high calling to be a mum in God's kingdom. To be a grandmother in the people of God.

That is a wonderful privilege. And we as a church want to value motherhood. We want to value grandmotherhood in this congregation for the high calling of that ministry.

Every family has a history, don't they? And at some point in every family's history if you go back far enough God broke in as they are.

[13:06] And so for my mum and dad they weren't brought up in a Christian home. They weren't brought up in a home that worshipped the Lord Jesus. In fact they were brought up in homes that had no time for the Lord Jesus. And yet my mum was gloriously converted in her late teens through the youth group.

My dad came to faith in his early twenties after a pretty difficult time. And the gospel broke in. And now there are generations of leaving.

All because God broke in to my mum and dad's life. And every family is a history. And eventually somewhere along the line God breaks in and he raises up a matriarch or a patriarch through whom he will change the whole direction of your family.

And you may be that person. Perhaps you're sitting here today and you didn't have the privilege of growing up in a Christian home. And God is going to change the whole future direction of your family.

With Esther maybe you've come to the kingdom for such a time as this. And maybe the Lord has made you a Christian so that you will be the matriarch and you will be the patriarch and someone who your great, great grandchildren will look back and say thank God they became a Christian.

[14:25] Because God changed the whole direction of our family through them. And so if you want to see the gospel preserved in Ealing start a dynasty. Leave a legacy. And if you're not married yet marry in the Lord.

And if you are married teach your kids the Bible and pray with them. And if you're still single and you're not sure whether you're going to get married be a surrogate aunt. Be a surrogate grandmother to the kids of this church.

They need it. And pray for your nephews and nieces so that future generations will rise up and call you blessed. So three generations time who is going to be preaching the Bible in this room? Three generations from now who will be evangelizing the people of Ealing and West London. Well it ought to be one of our children. Our grandchildren or our nephews or our nieces.

Let's see to it that it is. So leave a legacy and start a dynasty. That's one way that the gospel is preserved. Secondly he calls for gospel loyalty. Look at verse 15. You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me.

[ 15 : 36 ] Among them are Phygelus and Homogenes. They're great names aren't they? Everyone in the province of Asia that's modern day Turkey. Ephesus was where Timothy was based.

And so everyone in the province of Asia including Ephesus Paul is saying everybody's deserted me. I love this illustration.

I'm going to give it to you again. Kroischoff. He was the man who followed Stalin. He was one of the leaders of the Soviet Union. And he was quite a character. He was a leader in the 60s. He was once in Washington.

Him and JFK John F. Kennedy did a press conference. And Kroischoff had been part of the Politburo during Stalin's reign of terror. And now he's taken over from him.

And during the press conference Kroischoff was asked what were you doing when Stalin was killing millions of people? It's a fair enough question isn't it?

[ 16 : 41 ] And the question was translated into Russian. And as it was translated Kroischoff grew redder and redder in the face. He's a very hot tempered man. Until he finally exploded into the microphone.

Who said that? Who asked that? Who asked that? And of course no one moved a muscle. and the journalists put their head down in their notebooks and no one made eye contact with him.

And he said that is exactly what I was doing. Keeping my head down. And I'm ashamed of it. And so let me ask you what is it that makes you want to keep your head down as a follower of Jesus Christ?

What embarrasses you about being a Christian? What makes you feel ashamed to be associated with the Lord Jesus? Because do you see it's really easy isn't it for me to read about all these people in Asia who deserted Paul and to feel superior to them.

They deserted Paul. What does that look like? They kept their heads down. And one of the things that make us want to keep our heads down to keep a low profile.

[ 17 : 57 ] Can you see three times Paul says to Timothy do not be ashamed of the gospel. Look at verse 8. Do not be ashamed. Look at verse 11.

He's saying there isn't he for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle for which is why I suffer I do but I am not ashamed. I'm not ashamed Paul I'm not ashamed Paul so Paul says so don't you be ashamed or again in verse 60 Onesiphorus he was not ashamed.

And so verse 8 verse 12 verse 16 what Paul is calling Timothy to is gospel loyalty. And why would anyone be ashamed when you understand what the gospel is?

It's good news isn't it? How can there be any good news when you're on death row? He's about to have his head chopped off everyone in the province of Asia has deserted him. Where's the good news?

Look at verse 8. Don't be ashamed about me of the testimony about our Lord nor of me as prisoner but share in sufferings for the gospel by the power of God. And here's the message of the gospel who saved us and called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

[ 19 : 18 ] And it's now been shown it's now been manifested with his appearing. You know the film Amazing Grace? It's the story of William Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery.

It's a brilliant story. But do you know the interesting fact is that William Wilberforce started the Society for the Abolition of Slavery 50 years before it was actually abolished.

In fact out of the original group of people that met together to form the Society for the Abolition of Slavery only one person survived to actually see it happen 50 years later. 50 years of strategizing and planning and sweating and suffering for the cause.

Look what Paul says here. There's another kind of slavery he refers to. Look what he says in verses 8, 9, and 10. He says God has saved us.

God has rescued us. But in what way has God saved us? Look at verse 9. He saved us and called us to a holy calling. Not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before time began, the ages began.

[ 20 : 38 ] Grace means God giving us what we don't deserve. Giving us the opposite of what we deserve. And so instead of hell, can I put it like that, God gives us life.

It's how Paul introduces himself to Timothy isn't it? In verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus. We don't deserve life but God has given us eternal life.

An abundant life. Look at the way that he has given it. Can you see? It says before the beginning of time. And so before the beginning of time God had a plan to abolish death.

Before the beginning of time God set up a society for the abolition of sin and death. But now in time it's been revealed first hand.

And he's abolished death. He's defused death. Paul is sitting on death row. There's a ticking bomb. Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.

[ 21 : 50 ] But thank God Paul says Jesus defused the bomb. Paul knows he's still going to have to die. I'm afraid of dying. I wouldn't want my head chopped off would you?

I'm afraid of dying but I can honestly say as a Christian I'm not afraid of death. Because Jesus has defused the bomb. So do you remember Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 he taunts death and he says we don't live in fear of death.

Paul taunts death. He says death where's your sting? It's a picture of a bee isn't it? Once a bee has stung it dies. And once the sting has been extracted from the bee it dies.

And death is like that. That's what Jesus has done for us. And Paul is saying why would anyone be ashamed of the Lord Jesus when they understand what he's done and what he's come to do?

That he's come to put himself under the sting of death. And what is the sting of death? It's sin and guilt. That's what makes death so terrifying. That's why people are afraid to die because in death you don't just encounter your own weakness.

[ 23 : 00 ] but in death you encounter God your creator. And you have to give an account of him so the Bible says it's appointed for man once they die and then the judgment.

That's why death is so frightening. But Paul says once you've understood and trusted in the Lord Jesus thanks be to God who has given to us the victory in Christ Jesus.

Jesus has diffused death he's extracted the sting out of it. so that you this morning don't have to go through life in bondage to the fear of death.

Death is still isn't it even after COVID one of the great taboos. American hospitals speak of negative patient output.

People are afraid to talk about death. They're afraid to think about it. And so they fill their life up so that you just don't have to think about it. But you don't have to go through life like that.

[ 24 : 07 ] You might fear the circumstances in which you'll leave this world that's fair enough. But you don't have to be afraid of death anymore. And this church we could rename it couldn't we we belong to the Society for the Abolition of Sin and Death.

That's what the church is. the Society for the Abolition of Sin and Death. That's our message. Why would you be ashamed of that? I told you recently about Catherine Booth Sally the daughter Catherine Booth the daughter of William Booth the kind of great founder of the Salvation Army. And she's on that train isn't it and one of the passengers recognizes her. she's wearing a Salvation Army uniform and he feels he's got to say something and so he says I go to church. And she says go to church is that all you do in a dying world?

So let me ask you what are you doing for a dying world? Coming to church? That's the challenge Paul is giving isn't it? Look at verse 6 I love verse 6. Paul says for this reason I remind you Timothy fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Paul had seen some gift in Timothy he'd been set aside for the ministry. Here's a young man his life has been turned around by the gospel and passed down to him by his mum and his grandma.

[ 25 : 37 ] And Paul says do not grow cold. Fan the flame stir up the gift that is in you. Be a passionate Christian don't be lukewarm be self-disciplined be loving be effective.

Don't be half-hearted about it. Be all out for the gospel because you've got the very message that a dying world needs to hear and so stir up the gift within you.

Thirdly Paul invites Timothy to share the liberty of suffering for Christ. Look at verse 8. Don't be ashamed in verse 8 of the testimony about our Lord nor of me his prisoner. Can you see the shock in verse 8? Whose prisoner is the apostle Paul? You see he's not Nero's prisoner. I want to describe to you the conditions that Paul was in. We often think of prison like kind of wormwood scrubs or something like that. But he says in verse 16 doesn't he that I'm a nesiphorus at great difficulty in finding him. And so Paul wasn't in an obvious prison.

[ 26 : 52 ] There were loads of prisons in Rome at this time. Let me read you a description of what prisons was like in Rome. The prisons in Rome were squalid and physically dangerous. Delays in court procedure meant that they were usually overcrowded way beyond their capacity.

They were unheated. Sleep was almost impossible on the rough pallets on the floor. No bedding provided. Paul would have been wearing heavy iron chains perhaps linked to other prisoners to prevent anyone escaping.

The iron reacting to the prisoners sweat rusted making their flesh rot. The heaviness weakened limbs already short of food. The constant noise of chains on stone was yet another factor making sleep impossible.

Food beyond a meager portion was barely enough to sustain life. And it was the prisoners own responsibility. But how could Paul alone and cut off in Rome arrange that?

Lack of access to water meant that prisoners were not just filthy but frequently unrecognizable from kicked on dirt and matted beard and hair. For who would trust violent prisoners with access to razors?

[ 27 : 58 ] Clothes rapidly reduced the rags in such circumstances. It's no wonder that prisons were associated not only with execution but also death from disease and not infrequently suicide. One further obstacle lay in Onesiphorus' path as he traipsed the back streets of Rome trying to locate the prison which held Paul.

The prisons were airless and unhygienic because they were largely windowless. Obviously that prevented prisoners from getting out but it also prevented much light from getting in. The more secure a cell was the less light it would have had and an underground cell would have none at all. Onesiphorus was searching for an unrecognizable Paul among thousands of identical wretches often in pitch dark. It's no wonder Paul says that when he was in Rome he searched hard for me until he found me. Onesiphorus had performed a heroic labor of love.

It would have been time consuming dangerous. Paul says to Timothy don't be ashamed of me. Join me. Who in their right mind would want to join the apostle Paul in those circumstances?

Join me. Don't be ashamed of me because I'm not Nero's prisoner. I'm Jesus' prisoner. And that's the paradox of Christianity.

[ 29 : 14 ] What does it mean to become a Christian? It means that you hand your life lock, stock and barrel over to the Lord Jesus. That's what Paul has done in verse 12. Look. Which is why I suffer as I do because I am not ashamed for I know whom I believed and I'm convinced that he's able to guard until that day that which has been entrusted to me.

In those days you didn't have banks so when you went away on a long journey you'd find someone trusted who would look after your valuables. And Paul says I'm not ashamed of Jesus because I have found that he is able to look after what I've entrusted him with.

I know someone that I can trust myself to. Who are you going to trust yourself to on the day of judgment? And Paul says I'm not ashamed because I know.

He doesn't say I know what I believe. He says I know whom I have believed. George Whitefield was an 18th century preacher and he once asked one of his followers what do you believe?

And the man said I believe what my church believes. And Whitefield said well what does your church believe? The man said well my church believes what I believe. And Whitefield realized that he wasn't getting anywhere and he said to the man well what do you both believe?

[ 30 : 44 ] The guy said well the same thing of course. And there's a lot of people in churches like ours like that. Maybe it's you. And you believe something but you don't actually know what you believe.

And you've never really checked it out. It's really possible to be in a church like this and that to be true of you. You've never been persuaded of the Lord Jesus. Jesus. And perhaps you've drifted into church and you've drifted through church and you've never actually sat down and thought who

Jesus is.

And you've never thought well what has he done and can I trust him? Can I plead with you? If that's you ask someone to read a gospel with you.

to sit down with you and just talk you through the gospel of Mark. Paul says I'm persuaded and that is why I'm prepared to suffer.

I'm persuaded of who Jesus is. And that's why I'm not a prisoner to my circumstances. And it's why I'm not a slave to the spirit of the age. I'm not a prisoner to my own culture or my own subculture.

[ 31 : 57 ] I'm free. I'm free because I'm Jesus' prisoner. And I'm persuaded to keep that which I've committed to him until that day.

It's what it means isn't it? To be a Christian that you've handed yourself over to him. Some of you might be afraid of flying.

I've got friends who are afraid of flying. And you can go to Heathrow and there's a flight school isn't there? And they give you all the kind of stats on why flying is so safe.

And they take you through the kind of flight simulator and you go on it and you're able to see this is safer than driving.

This is safer than cycling on London streets. But the end of the course is this. You've got to get on the plane. You've got to entrust yourself.

[ 33 : 01 ] You've got to take that step of actually getting onto the plane. Look at verse 12. I'm not ashamed for I know whom I believed and I'm convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

You may know lots about the Lord Jesus, lots of facts about him. But you've never actually entrusted yourself to him. Let me challenge you church family to share the gospel with anyone and everyone you meet.

Let me challenge you not to be ashamed because you've got a great message. And let me challenge you to join the fellowship of the free by staying loyal to Christ. Stay loyal to the one who has set you free at such a cost.

Live for him and if necessary die for him. Leave a legacy. Let the gospel will be preserved in ending for generations to come.

Let's pray. Let's pray.