

2 Timothy 2

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[0 : 00] And if you've got a copy of the Bible, do turn to 2 Timothy chapter 2. The book of 2 Timothy is really all about the good news of the Lord Jesus.

It's all about how that good news of the Lord Jesus is preserved. How the gospel church is kept alive in the world. In the late Middle Ages, there was speculation about a possible sea route to India that went around the southern tip of Africa.

No one could be sure that it was possible, but some suspected it was. The trouble was, nobody had ever been around the bottom of Africa and got to India. Nobody had ever been there and come back.

There were plenty of attempts, but they'd all failed. Until eventually a man named Vasco da Gama returned to Lisbon. He'd rounded what was known on all the maps of the time as the Cape of Storms.

And he'd come back alive. And ever since then, the map of the world has changed. It's been altered because it's no longer called the Cape of Storms.

[1 : 08] It's now called the Cape of Good Hope. Because somebody made the journey. Somebody had come back to tell the tale. And what the Bible teaches and what the Apostle Paul is saying is that 2,000 years ago, the spiritual map of the world changed.

An event took place that Jesus Christ, descended from David, was raised from the dead. And that has changed the spiritual map of the world forever. And so if you remember in chapter 1 and verse 10 from last week, Paul talked about Jesus defeating death and bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel.

That before the death and the resurrection of Jesus, people lived not knowing the future. They lived in kind of superstition and darkness and death for many people then and still for today.

Well, what is it? It's a Cape of Storms. People have lived and do live all their lives in fear of the bondage of death. But the resurrection of Jesus changes that, doesn't it?

Once people understand it. The Apostle Paul is saying that through the resurrection of Jesus, through Jesus coming back to life again, the spiritual map has been changed. And Paul says, this is my gospel, verse 8 of chapter 2.

[2 : 33] Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, the offspring of David, that's my gospel. And that's why, verse 9, I'm suffering. I'm bound with chains as a criminal.

But the word of God is not bound. And God doesn't promise you that you will not die for the kingdom of God. Paul is about to die when he's writing this passage.

He knows this. It's his last letter. He's on death row. He will be beheaded for the gospel. And God doesn't promise you now that that's never going to happen. He doesn't promise any of us that we will escape dying for the kingdom.

But he does promise us that the kingdom will not die. And Paul is confident about that. He's about to lose his head. But he's confident that the world will not lose the good news.

He says, doesn't he, I'm locked up. But you can't lock up the gospel. And after I'm dead and gone, this good deposit, this pattern of sound teaching, which I have handed on to you, it will continue to change people's lives.

[3 : 45] It will bring hope in the face of death. It will bring light where there is darkness. It will bring hope where there was despair long after I'm gone.

And the question of this letter is, really, how does a church preserve the gospel? How will this church be a gospel preaching and proclaiming church long after we're dead and gone?

How is the word of God to be preserved? How will we, as a generation of Christians in West London, change the map of Elang?

What is required of us? That for our children, and for our grandchildren, what could be a cape of storms, actually becomes a cape of good hope.

And what will it take for us to change the spiritual map of this great city? And two things that he makes right at the beginning, it's a picture of a relay race. You know a relay race? In a relay race, you've got to make sure two things, don't you, which British sprinters, and American sprinters particularly, seem incapable of doing.

[4 : 53] You're going to do two things. One, you've got to run around the track and stay in your lane. And secondly, you've got to hand the baton over, haven't you? And that's what Paul is saying at the start of 2 Timothy chapter 2.

Don't drop the baton, run your race, finish your bit, don't fumble it, hand it on. So verse 1, that's the first thing to say. You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Stay strong in the grace of Christ Jesus. And verse 2, and what you've heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust, pass it on to faithful men so you'll be able to teach others also.

Stay strong, pass it on. And in verses 1 to 13, he uses three pictures to illustrate what it means to stay strong. And in verses 14, to the end of the chapter, he uses three illustrations to picture that. This sermon is exegetically perfect. So, stay strong in the gospel. Look at the three images. What picture comes into your mind?

[6 : 03] What's the first thing that comes into your mind when you think of the Christian life? If you were to ask your mates, your colleagues, your neighbours, what comes into your mind when you think about the Christian life?

What image would come into their mind? And so, Paul is saying to you, if we want to change the spiritual map of healing, these are the kind of people we need to be.

Stay strong. The first picture is verses 3 and 4. Share in suffering as a good soldier, a soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the one who entrusted him.

The thing about a soldier is you're under authority, aren't you? If you're in the army and they send you to Afghanistan, you can't say, to be honest with you, I'd far rather go to the West Indies. I'd far rather go to Jamaica. You go where they send you because you're not a civilian. You're not a tourist. You're under authority.

[7 : 10] And yet, for many Christians, it's like they're more like spiritual tourists than soldiers. So there's a prayer meeting, but, well, there was something good on the telly that night.

There's a pub quiz on that night. Doesn't sound like enduring hardships. I've been out three times this week. that's just too much. You see, for healing to be changed, to see people come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to grow in maturity, and the church grow, you've got to have the single-mindedness of a soldier in the front line.

So let's just imagine you're in Iraq. you're in the war zone there, and the bullets are whirring past your ears. And you say to the guy, have you heard the score in the cricket?

What is the score in the cricket? If you're in a battle as a soldier, do you know where Wales finished in the Six Nations? As the bullet goes past you here.

You're focused, aren't you? You're not easily distracted. You're not entangled, caught up with other concerns. You've got one thing in mind when you're a soldier, it's to stay alive.

[8 : 32] And Paul says, that's what involved in staying strong in the gospel. And so do you realize we're in the middle of a battle of a war zone? It's not a playground. And so you mustn't be surprised when you come home and you've had a tough day and you've got house group and you don't feel like going.

Or you're watching something on the internet and then you think, I need to read my Bible. So you get your Bible out and your concentration goes out the window. Don't be surprised at that. Or you recognize, you know, I need to spend some time in prayer.

And you begin to pray, don't you? And if you're anything like me, your mind just begins to whirl and to go in all sorts of directions other than to pray. And you and I shouldn't be surprised at that because it's a battle zone.

And there is an enemy who wants you to desert your post and the Christian life is a battle and it's a war. And if we're going to stay strong in Christ Jesus, then that's the kind of commitment that's required in do a hardship like a soldier.

The second picture is that of an athlete. Look at verse 5. Verse 5, an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. So there's no point is there an athlete when he fails his drug test saying, oh well, I had the flu that week and my mum gave me some medicine because you're not supposed to take drugs of any sort.

[9 : 57] You've got to compete according to the rules. It's only fair on the other athletes who've put in weeks and months and perhaps years of training. And Paul is saying if we're going to see the map of healing change spiritually, if we're to preserve the gospel, then you need not only the single-mindedness of the soldier, but you need the self-discipline of the athlete on the track.

So does that describe your Christian life or mine? Like an athlete on the track straining from the finish line? Or are you more like the guys in the commentary box, you know?

Chubby people yelling at people on the track when they've never been on the track themselves?

There are, aren't there, a lot of commentary box Christians in church life.

But they're hardly ever participants. And I want you because it's too serious, isn't it? It's too important. If we want to see healing one for Christ, then we need to be as single-minded as the soldier in the fiery line and as self-disciplined as the athlete on the track in our lives.

As you know, I'm trying to do a bit of running. It's just, it's so unenjoyable. So unenjoyable. There's not been a day that I've thought, oh, I can't wait to get out and run.

[11 : 18] I just never think of it. But because I'm a self-disciplined, hard-working athlete, you're not going to enjoy self-discipline, are you? Part of the point. Another picture, it's verse 6.

It's the farmer, isn't it? Look at verse 6. It's the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. I think farming life is tough, isn't it? There's no farmers. Any farmers here? In Ealing? No farmers?

Oh yes, Will. Will is a farmer, isn't he? Welcome. And as Will could tell us, and Hannah now because she's a farmer's wife, it's hard because she gets up before dawn every day sitting on that tractor for hours and hours.

You've got to plow up a field, you've got to sow a seed. Farmers are not in charge of the weather conditions, are they? And so, and the farmers I know, they go week after week, month after month after month, year after year after year with this hard, back-breaking work.

And why do they do it? Why do they do it? They do it because eventually they hope there'll be a crop. There'll be a harvest. And so why are we working hard in the gospel, in IPC?

[12 : 30] It's because, why? Why is it? It's because we want to see a crop. And in the Christian life and in Christian ministry, you don't always see results straight away, do you? Sometimes you never see results in your lifetime.

There are amazing stories out there of missionaries who gave their lifetime sowing, sowing the seed and they died having seen hardly any fruit. But we know, don't we, there will be a harvest. And God's word will not return to him void. And so as a church family, what are we, hard-working farmers or couch potatoes? Why is it so important?

Why is it so important to stay strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and to endure a hardship like a good soldier, to be disciplined like an athlete, to be hard-working like a farmer?

Why is it so important? Well, there's two reasons. Verse 11, 13. The first reason is for your own sake. So, verse 11, the saying is trustworthy. Really, that means you can trust me on this one.

[13 : 37] Paul is about to die. Then verse 12, he says, if we endure, we will also reign with him. So, what is at stake is whether we get to live and reign with Jesus in the new creation.

That's what is at stake. And if we disown him, if we deny him, he will deny us. And if we are faithless, he remains faithful. And so, there's a difference in how people look at verses 12 and 13. Sometimes it's read that verse 13 is really positive. If we are faithless, God is faithful and he will look after us. And I think that's what we'd like naturally for it to say.

But I don't think that is what it's saying. It is saying, if we are faithless, God is faithful to his word. And God's word contains warning and promises.

And God will always do what he says. And if we disown him, he will disown us. And so, for your sake, for your own salvation, you need to stay strong in the grace, the undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus.

[14 : 50] And so, when God called you as a Christian, it wasn't just for that meeting. It was for a lifetime. It wasn't for that kind of religious part of your life on a Sunday.

It's for all of your life and the rest of your life and all eternity. It is, isn't it? He that endures to the end will be saved. Paul says in Colossians, talking about the gospel towards the end of the chapter, he reminds them of this.

And he says, he says, and you, you wonderfully, you were once alienated, you were hostile in mind doing evil deeds. He's now reconciled you in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

If indeed, you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, don't shift from the hope of the gospel that you heard which has been proclaimed in all creation. If you continue.

It's not if you had an experience ten years ago. It's if you continue. I've just read a book on Lance Armstrong.

[15:55] Remember Lance Armstrong? He was like the seven-time winner of Tour de France. I thought he was great. I thought he was magnificent. These horrible journalists that didn't believe him. And in the book, there's these photos each of the seven times he won the Tour de France and there's pretty women on either side of him and he's beaming and Paris is looking adoringly at him.

And then there's a picture of the day after that he admitted to taking drugs to Oprah Winfrey on his own walking down the street. Isolated. It's a sad picture without a friend in the world.

It's what happens isn't it to athletes who don't compete according to the rules. It's what happens to people that will not endure. People I know people I love people who were for all I could see Christians they gave the impression of that anyway but now they're walking away from the Lord Jesus.

And when I see them I don't know what to do and I don't want to say. And you would never have imagined it would have happened but it did. Because unless you stick with the gospel unless you stick and stay strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ so for your own sake you need to hear this today.

But not just for your own sake look at verses 8 to 10 remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead the offspring of David it was preached in my gospel for which I'm suffering bound with chains as a criminal but the word of God is not bound.

[17:31] And then he says this therefore I go through everything therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect. I put up with it I put up with my imprisonment I put up with losing my life for the sake of the elect for the sake of those whom God has chosen.

See what Paul is doing there it's really wonderful. Paul speaks of the elect and he speaks of the doctrine of election that God chooses people from all eternity past and he says the doctrine of election is an incentive to evangelism.

It helps me in my evangelism. We use it as an excuse not to evangelize don't we? So people say this to me well if God has got his elect they're going to be saved anyway I don't need to worry about it do I?

It's going to happen. But that's not Paul's logic can you see that? Paul is saying that God has chosen the people before the foundation of the world to be saved and that means that you and I are not on a fool's errand.

And do you know what? I don't know who those people are. The elect don't have an aura about them they haven't got a special tattoo have they? We don't know who the elect are thank God.

[18:50] Let me tell you they are. They're the people that you bump shoulders with every day. There are people at this point they don't even know that they're elect. There are people in your own circle of friends and family whom God has chosen to be saved.

And Paul says it is worth putting up with all sorts of things for that to happen. I love Acts 18 Paul is in Corinth isn't he? And he's having a tough time he's on the point of giving up ministry.

And Acts 18 verse 9 the Lord speaks to him in a vision and he says don't be afraid Paul keep on going keep speaking don't be silent I am with you no one is going to attack you and harm you and he says this for I've got many people in this city.

And so Paul stayed for a year and a half. And God has many people here in this city some of them haven't been born yet some of them will be your grandchildren and you may be dead and gone before they arrive but God chose them before the foundation of the world to be saved and there are many people working in the offices in London in the streets of Ealing living around us who were chosen by God before the foundation of the world.

And they don't know it this morning it would never enter their minds but one day God willing to their surprise they will discover it is so. And so if IPC stays strong in the gospel if we carry on speaking

the word of God in Ealing if we don't throw in the towel and if we're willing to put up with deprivation and insults and to be thought of as bigots and to go through the suffering it will be worth it.

[20 : 28] Because it's through the gospel the telling of the gospel that God calls his elect. And so for your own sake stay strong in the grace of the gospel for the sake of the elect stay strong in the grace of the gospel.

He says as he stays strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus this isn't a pull yourself together man talk I hope it isn't coming across like that. The reason why I'm a Christian is all because of God's kindness the same that if you are a Christian that's the reason why you're a Christian it's totally undeserved God is a generous God and we stuff up don't we and we make mistakes and if I can put it like this we're not very good Christians and we're not very full on we're not very committed but God is generous and he's kind and he's abundant in grace and so stay strong in the grace of Christ Jesus.

Don't make that mistake of starting with grace and reverting to trying your best your hardest by works. How you stay strong you love the gospel you believe the gospel you preach the gospel to yourself.

And so you want to change the map of healing we've got to stay strong in the grace of Christ Jesus. when you come to this table at the end of this service there's nothing you do. You are given food to eat you are given wine to drink because the Christian life is one of grace it is one of receiving stay strong in that grace.

And not only stay strong pass it on three powerful pictures verse 15 it's a skilled workman verse 15 do your best to present yourself to God as one approved a worker who's got no need to be ashamed rightly handling the world of truth.

[22 : 12] I've not seen those programs for a while you know the ones where they expose dodgy workmen you know when people like me go to the garage and they say well we need to change your oil filter but they don't do anything and then you pay a couple of hundred quid builders who come and say they've done a repair on your roof but they've not really fixed it and they just charge you an enormous amount it's a great moment isn't it when the camera exposes them I love that moment we revel well at least I revel in their embarrassment and Paul is saying when it comes to handling the Bible the word of God make sure you're a skilled workman wisely handling the word of truth now primarily the application here is to preachers and Paul is saying it's too important for you to botch this up all those programs names are named aren't they and it's almost as if Paul is doing that in verse 17 Hymenaeus and Philetus

Hymenaeus used to be a member of the church in Ephesians but they booted him out 1 Timothy 1.20 he's been excommunicated he has been put under church discipline he has been told do not come to the Lord's table because you're acting in a way that shows you're not following the Lord Jesus Christ and we have to tell you you're not part of the church of Jesus Christ you're acting in a way that's against the gospel but he's still around he's still claiming to be a Christian teacher and Paul is exposing him here and his sidekick Philetus some kind of message they were saying that the resurrection has already happened they're dodgy operators and Paul says their teaching is like gangrene and if it gets into the body it'll kill you false teaching ruins households it wrecks people's lives and so if we want to see the map of Eden changed if we want to see spiritually the map of London changed we need to understand that we need to rightly handle the Bible and so primarily pastor teachers but not exclusively so you are all pastor teachers to some extent some of you are a mum or dad teaching the word of God to your children or a grandparent some of you are a teacher at school a house group leader a leader amongst club 16 or ignite or the language class or little stars and you're sharing the gospel at work with a friend maybe and so what we need to make sure is that what we're passing on is that pattern of sound teaching which has been handed down to us the godly deposit

I love the way it says can you see it it says there doesn't it and do your best verse 15 it's great do your best what do we say to our children we don't care do we if they get A's A stars or sixes or fives or whatever it is do we I hope you don't care about that what do you care about you care that you do the best and so you're not expecting I hope on a Sunday morning Billy Graham or Dr.

Lloyd-Jones to turn up just do your best Levy your house group leaders some of them might be great bible teachers some of them might not be what do you want from them do your best there's one infallible book there are no infallible preachers and demand from those who publicly preach the word of God that they do their best don't let me get away with riding my hobby horse not that I have

any be a Berean you know those Bereans they listen to the word of God intently they checked it out because it's too important to get it wrong because the salvation of people yet to be born is at stake the next picture in 2021 you've got the skilled workman but then you've got the household utensils you can have great fun with this it's a large house verse 20 and 21 now in a great house there's vessels of gold and silver wood and clay some for honourable some for dishonourable use therefore if anyone cleanses himself what is dishonourable he will be a miserable for honourable use send a part as holy useful to the master of the house ready for every good work if I come round to your house and you offer me a cup of tea

I would want it in a clean cup cup I don't expect you to serve me a cup of tea out of a dirty mug unless you're a student and the sink might be full of dishes the dishwasher may be stacked with crockery but I want a clean cup and so do you and God does as well God only drinks out of clean cups God only uses clean instruments I think that's the main point he's making if you want to be useful to God and surely we do don't we the Christian does want to be useful to God what you want most in your life is to be used by God to be useful to him then you will ongoingly clean yourself from sin and rid yourself from sin McShane is that great preacher in Dundee died when he was 29 and he said this my people's greatest need is my holiness not my scholarship God uses clean vessels I told you we've got

China that only comes out once a year on Christmas Day Aunt Lila's China drives me nuts what's the point of having China when it only comes out once a year for special occasions in case it gets broken do you know there's loads of Christians like that there's loads of Christians who come out for special occasions and you can't ask them to do anything in case they get broken I hope you'd rather be a mug that's washed up about half a dozen times a day we need more mugs in church life to be useful continually to the Lord to not be precious and for that to happen I've got to be ongoingly and continually clean I need to be cleaned up moment by moment ridding myself of sin the third picture is the Lord servant verses 24 to 26 it's a truism you can win the argument but lose a soul and that's juvenile

[28 : 32] I think that's what Paul is talking about when he speaks about the flee evil desires of youth we immediately think oh he's talking about lust I don't think that's what he's talking about there's a juvenile way of presenting the gospel look at that first bit of verse 22 flee youthful passions pursue righteousness faith love and peace there's a really juvenile way of presenting the gospel let me tell you what it is it's to major on the minors and so I think we've seen that in the last couple of years haven't we I've got friends who have become obsessed post-covid with a totalitarian government an authoritarian government all they talk to me about it seems that all they send me articles about they preach about an authority they've become majoring on the minors it can happen isn't it when people discover

Calvinism or reformed theology picking fights arguing about the doctrines of grace but exhibiting no grace of the doctrines I've been there see what Paul says to Timothy he says the Lord's servant to Timothy is gentle the Lord's servant must not quarrel the Lord's servant must be kind to everyone not resentful verse 25 correct his opponent with gentleness and God perhaps may grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth and they come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil having captured to do his will it's good to be reminded of that isn't it the dangers that churches like ours can become issues churches so someone like Richard Dawkins he becomes the enemy he's not the enemy he needs to come to his senses the God of this world has blinded him so he can't believe what needs to happen well somebody needs to get alongside Richard

Dawkins and open the Bible with him read the Bible with him and we need to pray for him not that he be intellectually convinced he could out argue any of us intellectually but that God might grant him repentance it's a gift we're not saved by our IQ are we thankfully we're saved by God's generosity and we should be praying isn't it that God would lead him and grant him repentance he's not the enemy maybe the lady who's in an abortion maybe the doctor who's performed an abortion they're not the enemy the gay couple who want to get married they're not the enemy we're told who the enemy is the devil is the enemy and we are to pray that God would have mercy and that God would open blind eyes he'd release Satan's captives and he'd bring people to their senses he'd open their eyes to the truth so how does the Lord's servant interact with that get a placard shout at them post things online no the Lord's servant is gentle

I've told you the joke that a comedian said once why is it that those who find a friend in Jesus find it so difficult to make friends with anyone else it's the Lord's servant we should be representing him what does the servant of the Lord say the Lord's servant says to those who are in Ealing and in London today says to you come and to me all you who are weary heavy laden who are weighed down under all the pressures of life in a fallen world all of you come to me and I've got the right arguments for you come to me because I am quarrelsome he says come to me because I'm meek and I'm lowly in heart come to me I'm going to be judgmental about you he says come to me and I will give you rest for your souls and that is the servant of the Lord and we are to be servants of the servant and if we want to see the map of Ealing changed then these are the people the reliable people that

God is calling us to let me wrap up we're not the only church in town but we are a church I hope that can be trusted with the gospel and we must be people who know our bibles who understand it well enough to pass it on to someone else to be skillful handlers of the word whatever our ministry is to be able to tell the difference between a foolish argument and a serious biblical disagreement to be a pure heart pursuing righteousness godliness and peace gentle not pushy love and so I pray that we desire the salvation of people that god would grant them repentance god would bring them to their senses and rescue them from satan's trap and that's the sort of people we are to be honest workers not dodgy operators clean instruments gentle servants of the lord let's pray