



A BIBLICALLY SHAPED LIFE

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Lesson 1 (8-13-23)

The Making of a Gospel-Centered Leader (2 Tim. 1:1-7)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,

²To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Go here for an overview of 2nd Timothy: https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/2-timothy-introduction/#overview

In these initial verses we are introduced to the key figures of the letter: Paul and Timothy. Paul begins by describing the origin and purpose of his apostleship and then describes some of the background of Timothy's life and ministry. As we observe verses 1–7, we learn how God calls us according to His will and shapes us by His grace. We gain important insight as to how God builds a gospel-centered leader.¹

Discussion Questions

According to 2 Tim. 1:1, 11, what has God commissioned Paul to do? How is this related to what God has commissioned Timothy to do (1:8; 2:2; 4:1–2)?

What do verses 3-4 tell you about Paul and Timothy's relationship?

In his prayer of thanksgiving, Paul draws attention to his and Timothy's spiritual heritage (2 Tim. 1:3, 5). What do we know about Timothy's upbringing, according to Acts 16:1 and 2 Timothy 3:15?

How might Paul's reference to the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother encourage Timothy to boldness and endurance (1:6–8)?

¹ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, <u>Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus</u> (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 135–136.

Who were the family or friends who (like Lois and Eunice for Timothy) inspired you in the faith?

Paul recalls Timothy's "sincere faith" (2 Tim. 1:5). What does it mean to have sincere or genuine faith? Consider 1 Timothy 1:2, 5, 19; 4:12; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:22; 3:10, 15; 4:7.

What is "the gift of God, which is in you" (1:6)? See 1:5, 7.

What does it mean to fan this gift into flame (1:6)? See 1:8.

How is our calling different from Paul's? How is it the same?

Do you have a spiritual mentor? Do you know someone for whom you could be a mentor?

How does a Christian maintain a clear conscience?

Was there anything from last week's sermon that was especially challenging? Convicting? Encouraging?

Lesson Outline [This lesson was adapted from *David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013)]

A Gospel-Centered Leader (2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7)

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Paul says that he was "an apostle of Christ Jesus." By claiming this title, Paul placed himself in the same camp as the Twelve who were selected by Jesus as apostles (Luke 6:13). Like these Paul had the privilege of learning directly from Jesus. He was sent by the Master with unique apostolic authority to teach in Jesus' name. Of course, Paul's apostleship was slightly different from the others' because he was somewhat of a late addition. On the Damascus Road the risen Lord commissioned him with a particular call to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15–16; 26:12–18). Even though Paul humbly called himself the "least of the apostles" (1 Cor 15:9), he was indeed part of this select group.

Therefore, this letter comes to us with divine authority because it comes from a divinely inspired apostle. It is a letter not just for Timothy in the first century but for Christians of all times in all places. May the Lord "give [us] understanding in everything" regarding this book of sacred Scripture (2 Tim 2:7).

1. The _____ of Paul's apostleship (1:1b).

Paul's apostleship was not owing to anything in and of himself. He states that his position was established "by God's will." Paul did not volunteer for it. He was summoned to it! He did not make a career move. He was "appointed" (1:11). Elsewhere, Paul describes his calling with pronounced awareness of God's sovereign grace and divine will:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope: ... I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry. (1 Tim 1:1, 12; emphasis added)

Paul, an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ.... But when God, who from my birth set me apart and called me by His grace, was pleased.... (Gal 1:1a, 15; emphasis added)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will.... I was made a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace. (Eph 1:1; 3:7; emphasis added)

Of course, God did not shape Paul into a gospel-centered leader apart from Paul's own spiritual sweat. The apostle was a worker; he writes that he "worked more than any of them." But Paul's work was preceded by God's work of calling him, and Paul's work was made possible by the enabling grace of God: "Yet not I, but God's grace that was with me" (1 Cor 15:10).

God shaped Paul into a mighty leader by first calling him by grace and then empowering him with divine strength. While we are not apostles in the same sense as Paul and the Twelve were, we do share some common experiences with them as those who trust in Christ. Like Paul, God calls us to Himself by His own will and pleasure, and by His power He enables us to live faithfully before Him for His glory.

2. The ______ of Paul's apostleship (1:1c).

Paul said that this calling was according to "the promise of life in Christ Jesus." Paul was commissioned to communicate the gospel, which he described as "the promise of life." As Paul awaited death, he knew there was the promise of life for those who are in Christ Jesus. The gospel gives life because at the heart of our message is a person, Jesus Christ, who is Himself "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). John says, "The one who has the Son has life" (1 John 5:12). Paul also writes that Jesus "abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim 1:10). Indeed, this theme runs throughout the Bible, for in Genesis and later in Revelation, we read of people eating of the tree of life and drinking from the water of life.

The gospel is like water: man did not invent it, and man cannot live without it. Therefore, faithful servants of Jesus will take the water to thirsty men and women. Are you showing the thirsty where you found everlasting water?

B. Timothy:	by the	of God (1:2–7)
Next, let's note three	shaping influences in Ti	mothy's life. Like us, Timothy was still a work in
progress! Paul menti	ons three means of grace	e that God used to transform this servant:

1. A personal _______(1:2-4). It is possible that Timothy met Paul and embraced the gospel on Paul's initial visit to Lystra (Acts 14). By the time Paul visited Lystra a second time, we know that the brothers there spoke highly of Timothy, referring to his spiritual growth and maturity. Paul then took Timothy with him on his mission (Acts 16:1-5). We see several snapshots of Timothy's ministry leading up to the writing of 2 Timothy...

Paul viewed Timothy as his own spiritual child (cf. 1 Cor 4:14–17). He introduces Timothy in verse 2 as his "dearly loved son" and says many other wonderful things about his loyal disciple. Commending Timothy to the Philippians, Paul confesses, "For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; ... you know his proven character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father" (Phil 2:20, 22). And Paul extends a greeting to his son: "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" (2 Tim 1:2). In this triad Paul highlights the indescribable love of God. God gives grace to the desperate, mercy to the guilty, and peace to the restless—all of it through Christ.

In verse 3, Paul expresses his love for his disciple by thanking God for him. Paul mentioned that he thanked God like his "ancestors." Paul was not being disloyal to his Jewish ancestors by believing in Jesus. His faith was the fulfillment of their faith and hope. When Jews come to Christ, they are, in a sense, coming home—all the way home.

Not only does Paul thank God for Timothy, but he also intercedes on his behalf: "I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day." We know that Paul urged believers to "pray constantly" (1 Thess 5:17)—that is, to be in a continuous state of prayer—but perhaps he is referring here to periodic times of prayer. I draw this from the fact that Paul said "prayers" (plural). Paul's other references to his "prayers" (for example, Rom 1:10; Eph 1:16; 1 Thess 1:2) suggest that he set aside designated times for prayer, apparently as Jesus did (Luke 5:16). Should we pray without ceasing? Absolutely! Live in communion with God! But setting aside specific times for intercession is both wise and beneficial.

Paul was locked in a prison, but his heart was free to seek the living God in prayer...Though imprisoned in harsh conditions, he still had important work to do: praying for his disciple, Timothy. Oh, the privilege of having faithful saints praying for us! Paul's thankfulness,

thoughtfulness, and prayerfulness were driven by two dynamics: his peaceful condition before God, and his personal love for Timothy.

Paul's condition before God is noted with the phrase "a clear conscience" (v. 3). Paul was not sinless, but he was guiltless. That is because Jesus had taken Paul's guilt through His substitutionary death on the cross. God cleansed Paul's guilty heart from an evil conscience through the work of Christ (see Heb 10:22).

Paul experienced the wonderful blessing that every true believer shares: peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ. As we approach our deaths, Paul shows us that there is nothing greater than knowing that our sins are forgiven. Is there anything more important than having a "clear conscience" before dying? The hymn writer says:

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought: My sin—not in part, but the whole Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

That's the song of one who possesses a clear conscience. Is it well with your soul?

Next, Paul's love for Timothy in particular is expressed beautifully in verse 4: "Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy." Evidently, the last time Paul and Timothy were together there were tears—maybe before Paul was taken off to the Roman prison. Now he wanted to see Timothy that he might be "filled with joy." This is the picture of a faithful believer's confidence before death and a loving mentor's attitude toward his disciple.

How important is *life-on-life* discipleship to you? As a pastor, it is often easy to overlook or neglect this Pauline model. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Timothy to invest in other men the way Paul invested in him. Do you have a Paul in your life? Do you have a Timothy in your life? Who is your spiritual son or your spiritual father?

What exactly do you do in a mentoring relationship? Verses 3–4 show us two essentials behind the act of mentoring: love and prayer. A true mentor must start here. From this starting point, I see some lessons for us who desire to mentor others. Paul helped Timothy in three areas: calling, character, and competency. In terms of calling, Paul encouraged Timothy to use the gifts God had given him to live out his calling (2 Tim 1:6). As for character, Paul urged Timothy to pursue godliness, endurance, love, and other Christlike qualities (3:10–12). As for ministerial competency, Paul coached Timothy on how he should respond to people appropriately (2:16, 23–26; 3:5), study the Word diligently (2:15), preach the Word faithfully (3:16–4:2), and do the work of an evangelist constantly (4:5). If you are an older leader, invest in a Timothy. Help him fan the flame of his calling, develop Christlike character, and grow in his competency.

2.	A godly (1	.:5).
	Timothy not only had the pr	ivilege of a mentor, but he also had the gift of a godly mother
	(Eunice) and grandmother (ois). In verse 5 Paul mentions the "faith" of all three individuals
	He says Timothy, like these	adies, has a "sincere" faith, the genuine article. By Paul's

statement, "I am convinced [this faith] is in you also," we are reminded of how every child must do his or her own believing. Timothy had the blessing of having a Christian mother and grandmother, but he still had to believe for *himself*.

While it seems that Timothy's father was an unbelieving Greek, these two ladies were vibrant Christians. Who knows? Maybe all three were converted from Judaism to Christianity through Paul's visit to Lystra. What we do know is that these godly ladies' faith was observable to Paul. Probably before they were believers, they taught Timothy the Old Testament (3:15), but now their understanding of these Scriptures was Christ centered. Timothy and these godly mothers came to know and love the fact that the Scriptures make us wise for salvation because they point us to the Savior Himself, who is the fulfillment of the Scriptures (see Luke 24:44).

From a parental perspective, having children is a wonderful gift. But with the gift comes responsibility. Are you teaching your kids the Scriptures? Do they see in you, mom or dad, a "sincere faith" in Christ? One cannot overstate the importance of living out the Christian life before watching children. I want to say to my kids, "[Follow] my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance" (see 2 Tim 3:10).

3.	The	and the	(1:6–7).	
	Finally, and most	t significantly, God	shaped Timothy into	a leader through the presence and
	gifting of the ind	welling Holy Spirit.	. Paul says, "Therefor	e, I remind you to keep ablaze the
	gift of God that i	s in you."		

Judged by the surrounding context of 1 and 2 Timothy, Timothy was not a spiritual rock. He appears to be physically weak (1 Tim 5:23), personally timid (2 Tim 1:7), and relatively young (1 Tim 4:12). But God delights in using the weak and the ordinary in order to demonstrate His mighty power. Thankfully, God uses "clay jars" so that only He can get the glory (2 Cor 4:7)!

Knowing the reality of God's power in the life of Timothy, Paul urges him to "keep ablaze" his gift. What is this gift? We do not know for certain. It seems connected to the phrase "through the laying on of my hands" (v. 6; cf. 1 Tim 4:14). This phrase seems to refer to an ordination or commissioning in which Paul affirmed God's call in Timothy's life. If so, then this "gift" is probably related to the spiritual endowment necessary for the work of ministry. Paul is reminding Timothy that God equips His servants to fulfill their ministry by granting them spiritual power and gifting.

How encouraging it is to remember that God gives His people the authority and enablement to carry out their assignments! Not everyone will have a personal mentor or a godly mother, but God does invest spiritual gifts in every believer (1 Cor 12:7). The fourth stanza of Martin Luther's hymn captures the wonder of the Spirit and the gifts:

That word above all earthly powers, No thanks to them, abideth; The Spirit and the gifts are ours Through Him who with us sideth. Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also; The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still: His kingdom is forever.

Praise God, for the Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who is for us!

The gifting of the Spirit not only encourages us and inspires worship, but it also inspires hard work. Paul reminded Timothy of his personal responsibility in becoming a gospel-centered leader. He told him (1) to develop and use his gifts (v. 6) and (2) to maintain spiritual discipline (v. 7).

First, we see that the gift is like fire. This Greek verb *anazopureo* ("fan into flame" or "rekindle") is in the present tense, emphasizing ongoing action. Paul was urging Timothy to keep the fire alive—indeed ablaze—by making full use of it! He was to do this, then, by exercising his gift passionately. God gave Timothy gifts to be used and developed.

There is no room for sluggishness in the Christian life. Rest? Yes. But laziness, passiveness, and timidity should not characterize the believer. Jim Elliot's prayer captures well the spirit of this verse:

God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine.

I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you, Lord Jesus. (Elliot, *Shadow*, 247)

Are you using your gifts passionately? Often I talk to Christians who are "waiting on a church to call so they can preach" or for some other ministry job to open up before they begin serving. While I understand their thought, we need to be careful not to overprofessionalize the ministry. If God has gifted you for gospel proclamation, then go proclaim! Maybe you do not have a brick church building to preach in, but there are people everywhere! Go preach to one, or two, or three. As Martin Lloyd-Jones says, go "gossip the gospel"—go share it with one person in a coffee shop, in a park, or in your neighborhood (Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, 24). Better yet, go overseas and gather up some kids in Africa and tell them the good news. You need to be developing and using your gifts, even if it is not in a glorious setting. Fan it into flame! That requires work, effort, and intentionality. Second, Paul tells Timothy to maintain discipline, "for God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment" or self-discipline (1:7). Paul here addresses Timothy's shyness and weaknesses and reminds him that his fear did not come from God. What comes from God is a "spirit" of power and love and discipline.

There is a discussion on whether or not "spirit" should be translated as "Spirit" with a capital *S* (meaning Holy Spirit) or as "spirit" with a lower case *s* (implying an attitude). While Paul may have referred to "a spirit" (not the "Holy Spirit"), that does not mean the Holy Spirit is not in view here. The word "for" in verse 7 alludes back to verse 6, where the reference is to the Spirit's gifting *in* Timothy (Paul also made a connection with the Spirit

and gifts in other places, like 1 Cor 12:4). Additionally, the words "love" and "power" are used especially for the work of the Spirit elsewhere in Scripture. Boldness, not cowardice, is a mark of the Spirit's work in believers (Acts 4:31).

The object of Timothy's fear remains unclear. Perhaps it was evangelism, proclamation, or pastoral leadership. Whatever its cause, we know that this fear did not have to be paralyzing to Timothy. Interestingly, even Paul faced fear. When he planted the church in Corinth, the Lord appears to him in a vision and says,

Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people. (Acts 18:9–10 ESV)

Do you see this? The Lord tells Paul to fight fear with His promises. He promises to be with him, to protect him, and to use him to bring people into the kingdom. Now Paul is directing Timothy to the same source of hope. He says essentially, "Timothy, in your fear, remember that God is with you, in you, and for you; His Spirit produces the power you need to endure and the love you need to minister. Be disciplined. Be diligent. Be brave, for God is with you."

Conclusion

Who has not experienced timidity and fear in ministry? If you have ever been a part of a church plant, you understand the fear of the unknowns. If you have ever done street evangelism, perhaps you know this feeling. If you have ever been in a tense meeting where people oppose you, even gang up on you, perhaps you have experienced timidity. Remember: fight fear with the promises of God. The Spirit of God empowering the people of God is sufficient to accomplish the mission of God.

Therefore, there is no excuse for not performing our mission with diligence. God has given us everything we need. The Spirit and the gifts are ours! God has given us spiritual gifts to execute our ministries and Spiritual power to enable our ministry.

How then is a gospel-centered leader formed? From this passage we see the mysterious combination of God's provision and man's humble responsibility. For Paul, clearly God appointed him and enabled him, but his appointment did not mean Paul was to be passive. No! He was to proclaim the promise of life actively! In the life of Timothy, God provided a mentor, mothers, and (most of all) the Spirit and the gifts to make him into an instrument for noble purposes. But Timothy had the responsibility of using these gifts. What about you? Do you recognize the gifts God has given you? Are you resting in His promises, relying on His power, and serving Him with passion?

Lesson 2 (8-20-23) Stand Tall, Suffer, and Keep the Faith (2 Tim. 1:8-14)

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ 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, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. ¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

Consider what Oswald Chambers wrote, "All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources."

If this is true (and it is!), then Timothy was the right man for the job. He was not endowed with a powerful body and iron constitution—he was frail. He was not bold but reticent. And he was not a natural leader. If the job was to get done, he would have to rely upon God. Everything would have to be the result of Timothy's profound dependence upon God's power and grace.

Timothy was surely heartened by Paul's introductory remarks in which the apostle reminded him that he was in the apostle's constant prayers and of his longing affection for his young disciple and of his confidence in the sincerity of Timothy's faith. And Timothy undoubtedly took further heart from Paul's reminder of the giftedness for ministry that he was to "fan into flame" and of the Holy Spirit's gifts of "power" and "love" and "self-discipline" (levelheadedness) for ministry. These bracing realities primed Timothy for the solemn charges to stand tall, suffer, and keep the faith—heady exhortations that range through verses 8–14.1

Discussion Questions

Paul urges Timothy, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner" (1:8). How does this command relate to Paul's charge in 1:6–7? Why should Christians be unashamed of Jesus and the gospel? Consider Luke 9:26; Romans 1:16; and 2 Timothy 1:12.

¹ R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, <u>1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit</u>, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 176–178.

In 1:9–10, Paul outlines the gospel he has received from God and entrusted to Timothy. What key points does Paul mention? (Look for at least six.)

Who among your acquaintances or family has expressed antipathy toward the gospel? What is that person's underlying philosophy behind the rejection?

What do people today want to add to the gospel? What do they want to take away from it?

What situations have you encountered in the last month where it has been difficult or unpopular to take a Christian stance?

How has Jesus "destroyed death" (1:10)? See Romans 3:23–25; 6:20–23; Hebrews 2:14–15.

Why is it crucial that God "saved" and "called" us not because of anything we have done (1:9)? See Ephesians 2:8–10; Titus 3:5.

How does Paul explain "the promise of life" (1:1) in 1:10?

In 1:12–14, Paul tells Timothy God's responsibility and man's. What deposit is God supposed to guard (1:12)?

What difference does verse 12 make to being able to suffer for, and not be ashamed of, the gospel?

What good deposit is Timothy supposed to guard (1:14)?

Paul tells Timothy to guard a treasure/deposit (1:14) and rekindle God's gift (1:6). Do you think you have been entrusted with any deposit? If so, what might it be?

If God has called us to do something, then what can we assume regarding the ability and resources we need to do it? See John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 3:4–6; Philippians 2:12–13; 2 Timothy 1:6–8, 14.

Was there anything from last week's sermon that was especially challenging? Convicting? Encouraging?

Lesson Outline [This lesson was adapted from *R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell,* <u>1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit</u>, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000)]

STAND TALL AND SUFFER (vv. 8–12)

The dual call to stand and suffer is immediately introduced: "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God" (v. 8). Stronger men than Timothy had wilted when faced with shame and suffering. The iron-willed, sword-wielding Apostle Peter had loudly declared, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33) but soon was ashamed to admit he knew Jesus and denied him outright before the soldiers and a servant girl as Jesus watched (cf. vv. 56–62). In those storied and (thankfully) fleeting moments, Peter fled the shame and suffering of Christ.

Stand Tall

The temptation for Timothy to succumb to shame was not a figment of Paul's imagination. The cross of Christianity was a scandal. It may seem incredible that people would view Jesus as shameful. But both Jews and Gentiles viewed crucifixion (a penalty reserved only for the worst of criminals) as the ultimate emblem of disgrace and dishonor. Polite pagan company never mentioned the equivalent of the English word *cross*. The loathsome word was too obscene. And in the sophisticated Greek environment, the preaching of the cross was held to be absurd (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23). The idea of a Jewish peasant becoming the substitutionary atonement for people's sins was laughable. Educated, urbane Greeks snickered at such crudeness.

There were also some in the Ephesian church (for example, Hymenaeus; cf. 2:17) who viewed Paul's sufferings and imprisonment as public proof that the Holy Spirit was not with Paul. Paul's enemies within the church believed that the resurrection (a spiritual resurrection) had already taken place and that those who had experienced it had been so endowed with the Spirit that their difficulties evaporated. Their theology was similar to today's "health and wealth" preachers. To them, Paul's sufferings and imprisonment in Rome were due to his shamefully unspiritual nature and the disapproval of the Holy Spirit.

But Paul urged Timothy not to succumb to such ungrounded shame, whether over the scandal of the cross or the ignominious suffering of Christ's servants. Rather, he was to stand tall, as Paul himself did in that foul dungeon. Paul's unbowed, towering posture is detected here in his subtle use of words as he describes himself as "his prisoner"—that is, the Lord's prisoner! He is in Caesar's dungeon, but Nero is not his captor—Christ is. And the apostle is proud, not shamed. Thus Timothy also ought to stand tall. "Be the man you are meant to be, Timothy!

Suffer

The parallel call to suffer is explicit: "But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God" (v. 8b). Rather than being ashamed of Paul's suffering, Timothy must stand tall and freely choose to suffer with the great apostle. Oswald Chambers was right when he wrote: "To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong; to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Paul did, whether it means suffering or not."

This said, suffering, rather than being removed by the gospel (as the health and wealth gospelers would have it), is actually part of the gospel. Jesus made this clear from the beginning when he forewarned his followers in the Upper Room:

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also." (John 15:18–20)

In the same way, Jesus crowned the Beatitudes with suffering, in essence saying that when you have attained the seven blessed qualities of poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, spiritual hunger, mercy, purity of heart, and peacemaking, you will suffer! "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). Suffering is part of God's gospel blessing.

When Jesus called Paul on the road to Damascus, he immediately sent Ananias to him, saying, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15, 16). And as the years passed, Paul would describe his ministry like this:

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. (2 Corinthians 4:8–12)

Paul encouraged the Colossians by telling them that suffering is a privilege: "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24). Likewise, he informed the Philippians about their privilege: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Philippians 1:29). Later in 2 Timothy he will say again to his young protégé, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12; cf. Romans 8:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14; 3:4). And Paul's words were sealed with his own blood.

This first-century theology needs to be central in our twenty-first century theology. Persecution is inevitable for serious Christians. It is a privilege—"It has been granted to you ... to suffer for him." It is a blessing—"Blessed are those who are persecuted" (Matthew 5:10).

Suffering is never pleasurable. But it can be eased by the company of those undergoing the same thing. Timothy was called to join Paul in suffering for the gospel because what is so difficult alone is easier to endure (and even rejoice over) in the company of other believers. In the same way, "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41). Suffering is not something any person or group chooses or endures in its own power, and that is why Paul calls Timothy to do it "by the power of God," which Timothy had been given, as verse 7 said.

Everything of God

The reason that Timothy (and Christians of any age) can rely on God's power is because it is inseparable from God's grace. Paul here sets forth the gospel in all its fullness by repeatedly holding high the gracious glories of the gospel in verses 9 and 10. William Barclay correctly declares of this section: "There are few passages in the New Testament which have in them and behind them such a sense of the sheer grandeur of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

	arace

The power or ability to suffer in a godly way is rooted in God's sovereign grace. "But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace" (vv. 8b, 9a). The gospel originated in God, and the gospel is totally the good news of God's grace. It is not only the gospel of Jesus Christ but "the gospel of God," as Paul calls it in Romans 1:1. It is not based on anything we have done. It is all of grace—undeserved kindness from above.

As Paul puts it in Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy." And most famously he says in Ephesians 2:8, 9, "By grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." If our salvation depended on anything in us, our position, based on any realistic estimate of ourselves, would be hopeless. All glory goes to God for his sovereign, omnipotent, sustaining grace!

grace.
9

The next phrase celebrates not only sovereign grace but preexistent grace: "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time" (v. 9b)—literally, "before times eternal." Thus we understand that Christ existed before the beginning of time and that grace preexisted in Christ. This thought is expanded in Ephesians 1:4–6—"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves." And since God

gave grace to us in Christ before history began, it is absolutely certain that salvation is not from our works. God the Father gave us grace in Christ before we did or could do any good works. Our salvation is due only to God's preexistent grace.

_____ grace.

Ultimately, God's sovereign grace, preexistent in Christ, became visible and effective in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. "But it [grace] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (v. 10). The gospel is the good news "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3b, 4). This gospel is all-powerful. It can save anyone who believes, as Paul celebrates: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew; then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16). The glory of the gospel is that everything is of God. It is a gospel of sovereign grace, preexistent grace, visible grace that begins and ends in him.

Standing and Suffering

At this last mention of the gospel, Paul exults in his privilege. His soul dances at the thought of his call: "And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher" (v. 11). He was a *kerux*, one who sounds forth the evangel, the greatest news ever told. He was an *apostolos*, one sent with a specific commission from God. And he was a teacher, a *didoskolos* (his favorite word in the Pastorals), as he outlined the great doctrines of the faith, the apostolic deposit. And as he marvels at his privilege, he reflects on his suffering: "That is why I am suffering as I am" (v. 12a). "I am suffering because the gospel is so unutterably glorious. I am suffering because it is so powerful. I am suffering because it is the only hope of the lost."

As he stands tall, he further exults, "Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (v. 12b). Think of it! Though he is entombed below ground in a dark, dripping cell, awaiting execution, though he seems to be a forgotten cast-off to the world, and certainly to his enemies, he vows, "I am not ashamed."

Why? "Because I know whom I have believed." Certainly Paul knew what he believed as well as any Christian who has ever lived. He authored at least thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. But he stresses whom he has believed in and continues to believe in (perfect tense). There is no wavering, no doubt—only the profound confidence of perpetual faith and a constant relationship with God. Thus he stands imperially tall, unashamed.

Why else is he not ashamed? "I ... am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (v. 12). Paul lived with the certainty that God would guard his life's commitment to the gospel until the great day of Christ's return and final judgment (4:8). Paul was absolutely certain that his gospel deposit would be protected right up to and at the judgment, where God would assess everything to his glory. So Paul towered unashamed. God would vindicate him!...

What Paul was doing here by letter was extending his apostolic hand out of his Roman prison, across the boot of Italy, across the Adriatic Sea, across Greece, across the Aegean to Ephesus and was beckoning Timothy to join him in standing unashamed while suffering for Christ. His hand still reaches out through the centuries to Christ's followers...It is a great day when by faith your heart says yes to whatever the gospel brings and you join hands with the apostle. Will you do so today?

Conclusion

Paul concludes this section with his famous charge to Timothy to keep the faith by living out two parallel commands. First: "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (v. 13). Second: "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (v. 14).

Keep it. By urging Timothy to keep his instruction as the pattern for sound teaching, Paul set the theological parameters for the preaching of the gospel. But Paul was especially concerned about how it was done—about Timothy's attitude—that it be "with faith and love in Christ Jesus." The attitude with which Timothy maintained his orthodoxy was almost as important as the orthodoxy itself. How different church history would have been if the church in succeeding generations had taken this to heart. How different the church would be if this were true today.

Guard it. The second imperative—to "Guard the good deposit"—goes a step further. It is the same note that was sounded at the end of 1 Timothy: "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith" (1 Timothy 6:20, 21). Timothy must always be loving. But at the same time he must be perpetually vigilant—like a soldier. Timothy must be tough!

But this is not the task of Timothy alone. He must do it with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And here the appeal comes full circle. It began in verses 6, 7 with an appeal to Timothy to live out his ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then followed four commands: 1) "Do not be ashamed." 2) "Join with me in suffering." 3) "Keep ... the pattern." 4) "Guard the good deposit." Now again he returns to the Holy Spirit's enabling power: "Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."

There was no doubt that Timothy could do this. He was a prime candidate because, in Oswald Chambers's words again, "All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources."

God is looking for a few good "nobodies"—people who know they cannot succeed in serving him in their own strength. These are the people who are able to stand tall and who will unashamedly testify about Jesus. Like Paul they are unashamed of the gospel because in their

weaknesses they rely on the Holy Spirit. These are the people who join in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. They are humble because they see gospel grace for what it is—sovereign grace, preexistent grace, visible grace in the Lord Jesus Christ—all of God and not ourselves. They are so overwhelmed by the gospel that they both suffer and stand tall. These are the people who keep the pattern of sound teaching and guard the gospel. Their weakness is the occasion for God's power, their reticence for his loving aggression, their need for the help of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 3 (8-27-23)

Deserted, Refreshed, and Responsible (2 Tim. 1:15-2:2)

¹⁵ You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶ May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, ¹⁷ but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— ¹⁸ may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

2 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

The ancient fable of "The Two Travelers and the Bear" describes a fearsome encounter with a huge bear. One traveler, in great fear, shimmied high into a tree, giving no thought to his friend. The other, with no chance to go anywhere, remembered that bears often lose interest in the dead and so fell to the ground feigning death. The bear came alongside and nuzzled and sniffed at his face and ears. Thinking the man to be dead, the beast ambled away. When the bear was long gone, the man up in the tree climbed down and asked his friend what the bear had whispered to him, "because," he said, "I noticed that his mouth was long at your ear." The other said, as he stood dusting himself off, "It is no secret what he told me. What he said was that I should be careful about keeping company with those who, when danger arises, leave their friends in the lurch!"

Such a fable would probably have evoked a knowing smile from the Apostle Paul because he had been abandoned by his fair-weather friends in Asia, among them Phygelus and Hermogenes. But at the same time he experienced the upside—the coming to him of Onesiphorus, who cared for him in his need.

The story, as he tells it in the brief span of verses 15–18, is one of *desertion* and *encouragement*. Paul relates this to further steel Timothy to stand tall and suffer with him for the gospel, as he had just charged him in verses 8–14. In essence he says, "Remember Phygelus and Hermogenes? Don't be like those tree-climbing deserters. Remember Onesiphorus who refreshed me? Be like him."

Discussion Questions

In 1:15–18, Paul describes the actions of some Christians. Many have deserted him. Why does Paul commend Onesiphorus?

¹ R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, <u>1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit</u>, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 185–186.

Where could you use some spiritual refreshment, as Onesiphorus gave to Paul?

How does Onesiphorus illustrate Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 1:8?

How is Timothy to ensure that the message of Christ will live on (2:2)?

How does Paul's charge to Timothy in 2:2 relate to the task of appointing elders or overseers (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9; Acts 14:23)?

How does Paul's relationship to Timothy offer a model for discipling leaders in the church? See 2 Timothy 1:13; 3:10–11.

Where are you in the process Paul describes in 2:2? For example, are you just learning to understand Paul's gospel? Are you ready to begin entrusting some of what you know to others? Could you train someone else to teach what you know?

Was there anything from last week's sermon that was especially challenging? Convicting? Encouraging?

Lesson Outline [This lesson was adapted from *Bryan Chapell*, <u>1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit</u>, *Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000)* and *John R. W. Stott,* <u>Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy</u>, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973)]

1. DESERTED (v. 15)

Daul's

ruurs
Behind this text lies the fact that Paul was a lover of people and that he had an immense
capacity for friendship. His vast circle of comrades included John Mark who had grown to be so
helpful to Paul, Silas who accompanied him on his second journey, Onesimus, the fugitive Asiar
slave converted in Rome, Epaphroditus, the friend of the Philippian church who came to see
Paul in Rome, Priscilla and Aquila who risked their lives to help him, Tychicus, a "dear brother"
(Ephesians 6:21), Tertias, his secretary, Amplias, "whom I love in the Lord" (Romans 16:8), Luke
and of course Timothy, "my dear son" (1:2).

If you had no information about Paul, you would probably assume that the massive, magisterial theology of Romans must have come from an ivory-tower intellectual with several Ph.D.s who had no time for people. But in the final chapter of Romans (vv. 1–24) Paul's closing greetings mention thirty-three names, twenty-four of whom were in Rome. What makes this even more impressive is that Paul had never been to Rome! Most of the people he mentions there had met him on his journeys and had subsequently taken up residence in Rome. Paul's magnanimous heart knew where each friend was geographically and spiritually.

He prayed for his friends constantly, as he regularly reminded them in his letters. Their ups and downs were his ups and downs. "Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?" (2 Corinthians 11:29). People, relationships, and friendships consumed Paul!

Paul's
As seen here, during his second Roman imprisonment Paul was lonely. The final chapter of the
present letter reveals that only Luke was with him (4:11). Titus and Crescens had gone away
(4:10), Demas had forsaken him (4:10), and Alexander had done him much harm (4:14).

Paul's situation here was much different from his first Roman imprisonment as he earlier described it in his letter to the Philippians. Granted, he had been abused and doubled-crossed at that time! "It is true," he wrote, "that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry" (Philippians 1:15). That is, some were using his incarceration to promote their own ministries. Yet he did not feel abandoned. He was not alone, for the faithful surrounded him. But now in the dungeon he was isolated and lonely. Even if people wanted to see him, his cell was very hard to find.

Paul's
In reality, Paul had been deserted by a substantial group of people as he reminds Timothy: "You
know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and
Hermogenes" (v. 15). Certainly "everyone" was not strictly literal (all Christians in Asia), because
Timothy, Onesiphorus and his household, and others like them were residents of Asia. But the
defections were so staggering that it felt as if everyone had "deserted" him—an "exaggeration
characteristic of depression." This tragic defection encompassed the entire province of Asia
Minor and its capital of Ephesus—and the majority of Paul's one-time supporters. Many
Ephesians were prominent in this defection. We do not know whether Phygelus and
Hermogenes were Ephesians or not. But they needed no identification to Timothy. He knew
who they were!

This desertion evidently refers to a specific event, though we do not know for sure what it was. Most think it was Paul's arrest. The Roman courts would never have prosecuted Paul on a purely religious accusation. He would have been held on a political charge, such as sedition or endangering the peace. Nothing less would have made him a prisoner of the state. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Adversity separates

the chaff of surface friendship from the substance of real friendship. The truth had become apparent through Paul's difficulties...

Also, some of Paul's detractors may have seized on his arrest as *prima facie* evidence that God was not with him, claiming that if he had resurrection life and the blessing of the Spirit, he would be the picture of prosperity, not a Roman prisoner. In any event, Phygelus and Hermogenes had led the shameful and painful desertion.

Ρ	aul	's	

Paul, the great people-oriented person, a passionate lover of the church, was in pain. You have to be in a real relationship with people for them to really hurt you. People you do not know cannot hurt you. Hurt comes when you have known them, loved them, and invested in them. C. S. Lewis said, "To love at all is to be vulnerable. If you don't want to be hurt, give yourself to no one. Not even a cat...." But Paul had given them his heart, his whole life—everything...

Paul, having such a great heart, had been deserted and slandered by people he loved. Consequently, he was heartbroken. His implicit message to Timothy was, "Don't be like Phygelus and Hermogenes. Stand with me. Suffer with me. Keep the faith with me—in the dark of this dungeon where neither the sun nor the moon shines."

2. REFRESHED (vv. 16-18)

Onesiphorus's	

A universe removed from desertion by some is Onesiphorus's treatment of Paul. So Paul blesses him: "May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me" (vv. 16, 17).

There are many reasons why it was difficult for the Asian Onesiphorus to locate Paul. He had never been in Rome and did not know his way around. Part of the city had been destroyed when Nero burned it. For some time the location of Paul's imprisonment had been kept from the Christians. Also, believers in Rome had been reduced in numbers due to persecution and flight, and not all were eager to reveal to a stranger that they had any doings with Paul.

But Onesiphorus "searched hard," treading the serpentine passages of Rome, knocking at doors, asking in his provincial accent about Paul. Doors slammed shut, disapproving eyes watched as he continued his search, but he refused to desist. He was asking dangerous questions. The lesser devoted would have made no search at all. Others would have cooled their consciences with minimal effort—"He simply couldn't be found!" But not this man. Imagine the potent joy that jolted Paul when in came his old friend bearing supplies.

And once Onesiphorus found Paul, he kept returning. "He often refreshed me," says Paul. The refreshment was more than material. It was emphatically spiritual—soul refreshment—because the root of the Greek translated "refreshed" is the word for soul. Whereas most had recoiled from Paul's chains, Onesiphorus apparently counted it an honor to return again and again to refresh Paul. It had been dangerous to ask where Paul was. It was dangerous to visit him. It was most dangerous to return again and again. But Onesiphorus was there for Paul, when neither the sun nor the moon shone on his friend. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

In Onesiphorus' visit to Paul in prison we see the living out of Christian mercy that Jesus said will be so grandly rewarded in the final judgment—because the mercy was actually done to him (Matthew 25:34–40)...

The connection between Christ and genuine believers is like that of brother to brother and brother to sister. Because Christ is so intimately identified with Paul, when Onesiphorus "refreshed" Paul, he refreshed Christ! There in that subterranean dungeon Onesiphorus ministered to Christ. Someday Onesiphorus in utter self-forgetting humility may say something like "When did I see you in prison?" And Jesus will say, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine (what you did for forsaken Paul in the dark of the dungeon), you did for me." "Timothy, don't be like the world—don't be like Phygelus and Hermogenes. Be like Onesiphorus."

Paul was obviously moved as he retold this incident and therefore breaks off the account and voices his appreciation for Onesiphorus by expressing his wish for him: "May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus" (v. 18). Some believe that this wish and a similar wish for mercy in verse 16 indicate that Onesiphorus was dead. Paul wishes that the Lord will show mercy to "the household of Onesiphorus" (v. 16) but does not mention the good man himself. And they conclude that in verse 18 Paul's wish that "he will find mercy from the Lord on that day" refers to the Second Advent and the final judgment that awaits departed Onesiphorus.

If this is so, the wish is extremely poignant. If this view is correct, Onesiphorus perished during his journey and care for Paul. Perhaps it was due to the rigors of ancient travel or even possibly to foul play in the Roman labyrinth. Others argue that while this is possible, the wishes expressed for his household and then that Onesiphorus will find mercy at the judgment may be due to the fact that he and his household were separated. The evidence is inconclusive. That Onesiphorus was alive and separated from his family is as possible as that he was dead.

What is conclusive is that this was not a prayer for the dead, as some have argued. Paul's wish was not directed as a prayer to God. Paul was merely expressing his good will regarding this excellent man—"May he find mercy."

Notice how beautifully Paul expressed his wish. The first mention of "Lord" refers to Christ, and the second mention of "Lord" to God the Father: "May the Lord *Christ* grant that Onesiphorus will find mercy from the Lord—*God the Father*—on that day!"

Did Onesiphorus find mercy? We can be sure he did. Jesus had said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7). This spiritual axiom will forever be realized by Paul's good friend. And did he receive rewards? Onesiphorus actually refreshed the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus' words were, and are, to that good man, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." He actually refreshed Jesus Christ. Think of it. And think of his reward.

Paul, that lover of souls, that amazing lover of people, whose very heart rate rose and fell with the church—the man who always kept on "praying for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18)—this man sat isolated and lonely in a Roman dungeon for the sake of the gospel. He would exit the cell only when he was led to his death. And how did the church respond? Tragically, most of the believers in Asia Minor deserted him out of fear. Two of them we know by name. Timothy must not be like them! Rather, he must stand tall, suffer, and keep the faith—like Onesiphorus who risked his life to find Paul, then refreshed him again and again. He was not ashamed of Paul's chains. And what Onesiphorus did for Paul, he actually did to Jesus! What mercy he will see on the day of judgment! "Timothy, be like him. Stand tall and unashamed."

3. RESPONSIBLE (2:1-2)

The first chapter ended with Paul's sorrowful reference to the widespread defection among Christians in the Roman province of Asia (1:15). Onesiphorus and his household seem to have been the outstanding exception. Now Paul urges Timothy that he too, in the midst of the general landslide, must stand his ground...Like Paul, Timothy had been called to responsible leadership in the church not only in spite of his natural diffidence but in the very area where the apostle's authority was being repudiated. It is as if Paul says to him: 'Never mind what other people may be thinking or saying or doing. Never mind how weak and shy you yourself may feel. As for you, Timothy, be strong!'

Of course if his exhortation had stopped there, it would have been futile, even absurd. He might as well have told a snail to be quick or a horse to fly as command a man as timid as Timothy to be strong. But Paul's call to fortitude is Christian, not stoical. It is not a summons to Timothy to be strong in himself—to set his jaw and grit his teeth—but to 'be inwardly strengthened' by means of 'the grace that is in Christ Jesus'...Timothy is to find his resources for ministry not in his own nature but in Christ's grace. It is not only for salvation that we are dependent on grace (1:9), but for service also.

Paul proceeds to indicate the kind of ministry for which Timothy will need to strengthen himself by Christ's grace. So far he has been exhorted to hold the faith and guard the deposit (1:13, 14). He is to do more than preserve the truth, however; he is also to pass it on. If the disloyalty of

arrangements for the handing down of the truth intact to the next generation. In this transmission of truth from hand to hand Paul envisages four stages. First, the faith has been entrusted to ______ by _____. This is why he has called it 'my deposit' (1:12). It is his by deposit, not by invention. As an apostle of Jesus Christ he insists that his gospel is 'not man's gospel', whether his own composition or somebody else's. Nor is he relying purely on human tradition. On the contrary, he could write: 'I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal. 1:11, 12). Secondly, what has been entrusted to Paul by Christ Paul in his turn has entrusted to . So 'my deposit' becomes virtually 'your deposit', and 'what has been entrusted to me' (1:12) is now 'the truth that has been entrusted to you' (1:14). This deposit consists of certain 'sound words' which Timothy has heard from Paul's own lips. The exact expression 'you have heard from me' is repeated in 2:2, though now with the addition that Timothy has heard it 'before many witnesses'. The agrist tense would seem to refer not to a single public occasion on which Timothy heard the apostle's teaching—such as his baptism or ordination—but rather to the totality of his instruction over the years. And the reference to the many witnesses shows that the apostolic faith was not a secret tradition handed on privately to Timothy (such as the Gnostics were claiming), whose authenticity there was no means of testing, but a public instruction, whose truth was guaranteed by the many witnesses who had heard it and who could therefore check Timothy's teaching against the apostle's. Thirdly, what Timothy has heard from Paul he is now to 'entrust to whom there are evidently some left among the many deserters of Asia. The men Paul has in mind must be primarily ministers of the word, whose chief function is to teach, Christian elders whose responsibility it would be—like the Jewish elders of the synagogue—to preserve the tradition. Such Christian elders are 'God's stewards', as Paul has recently written to Titus (1:7), because both God's household and God's truth are committed to their trust. And the fundamental requirement in stewards is trustworthiness (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). They must be 'faithful men'. Fourthly, such men must be the sort of men who 'will be able to teach _____ The ability or competence which Timothy must look for in such men will consist partly in their integrity or faithfulness of character already mentioned and partly in their facility for teaching. They must be didaktikoi, 'apt teachers', a word Paul has used of candidates for the ministry in 1 Timothy 3:2 and will use again later in this chapter (2:24).

the Asian church made it imperative that Timothy should guard the truth with loyalty, the approaching death of the apostle made it equally imperative that Timothy should make

Conclusion

Here, then, are the four stages in the handing on of the truth, which Paul envisages: from Christ to Paul, from Paul to Timothy, from Timothy to 'faithful men', and from 'faithful men' to 'others

also'. This is the true 'apostolic succession'. Certainly it would involve men, a line of 'faithful men' at that, but the succession from the apostles is to be more in the message itself than in the men who teach it. It is to be a succession of apostolic tradition rather than of apostolic ministry, authority or order, a transmission of the apostles' doctrine handed down unchanged from the apostles to subsequent generations, and passed from hand to hand like the Olympic torch. This apostolic tradition, 'the good deposit', is now to be found in the New Testament. Speaking ideally, 'Scripture' and 'tradition' should be interchangeable terms, for what the church hands down from generation to generation should be the biblical faith, no more and no less. And the biblical faith is the apostolic faith.

In the rest of this second chapter of his letter Paul enlarges on the teaching ministry to which Timothy has been called. He illustrates it by using six vivid metaphors. The first three are already favourite images with Paul—the soldier, the athlete and the farmer. He has made use of them several times in former letters to enforce a wide variety of truths. Here they all emphasize that Timothy's work will be strenuous, involving both labour and suffering.

Lesson 4 (9-10-23)

Endure for the Gospel: Part 1 (2 Tim. 2:3-5)

To inspire Timothy for faithfulness in ministry, Paul uses three simple but powerful images: the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. These are some of Paul's favorite images, and he uses them elsewhere to illustrate various truths. Not everyone serves in the military, competes as an athlete, or works as a farmer, but the analogies Paul draws serve as representative examples of the types of qualities believers, and Christian leaders in particular, ought to cultivate.

Discussion Questions

How are Christians and soldiers alike? How are they different?

How are Christians and athletes alike? How are they different?

What do the examples of the soldier and the athlete teach about the Christian life?

How would these illustrations encourage Timothy to steadfastly endure his own suffering?

What kinds of "civilian pursuits" (2:4) can "entangle" a Christian? How can we avoid such entanglement?

What "rules" might Paul have in mind in 2:5, and how do they apply to you personally?

Was there anything from last week's sermon that was especially challenging? Convicting? Encouraging?

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

¹ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, <u>Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus</u> (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 164.

² Andreas J. Köstenberger, <u>1-2 Timothy & Titus</u>, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 229.

Lesson Outline [This lesson was adapted from *John F. MacArthur Jr., <u>2 Timothy</u>, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995)*]

1. THE SOLDIER (2:3-4)

Paul uses the soldier to illustrate characteristics of a strong spiritual life. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul expands on this figure. After his counsel cited above, to "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might" (Eph. 6:10), he says, "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (vv. 11–13). He admonished believers at Corinth about the offensive side of that battle, saying, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses" (2 Cor. 10:3–4).

Paul not only calls on Timothy to serve the Lord as a soldier, but as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. A spiritual Christian does not simply do minimum duty for his Lord, Christ Jesus, but serves Him with everything he is and has.

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By adding with me, he gives assurance that he would not ask anything of Timothy that he himself was not doing or willing to do...It is difficult for Christians in most of the Western world to understand what serious spiritual warfare and suffering for Christ mean. The secular environment in our society is becoming more and more hostile to Christianity and to religion in general. But we are not faced with loss of job, imprisonment, and execution because of our faith. With few exceptions, being a Christian will not keep a student out of college or a worker from getting a good job. But the more faithful a Christian becomes and the more the Lord blesses his work, the more Satan will put roadblocks, hardships, and rejection in the way, the more evident the spiritual warfare will become, and the more frequent and obvious the hardship will become.

A soldier in active service does not have a 9 to 5 job, or even a long 60- or 70-hour work week. He is a soldier 24 hours a day, every day of the year. His body, his health, his skills, his time—all that he is—belong to the military in which he serves. Even when on leave, he is subject to recall at any time, without notice and for any reason. And whenever ordered into dangerous duty, he is expected to put his very life on the line without question or hesitation.

	2. Consequently,	the second mark of a good soldier is that he	
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Entangle himself translates a passive form of emplekō, which literally means to weave. Paul is not speaking about things that necessarily are wrong in themselves. It is not that a soldier should have no contact at all with his former friends and surroundings, but that he is not to become caught up and enmeshed in them. Those things are irrelevant to his soldiering and are always subject to being relinquished. In the same way, a good soldier of Christ Jesus refuses to allow earthly matters to interfere with the fulfillment of his duty to his Lord. Many Christians, pastors, special ministries, and doctrinally sound churches have been undermined by concerns and activities that are innocent in themselves but have been allowed to crowd out the primary purpose of serving Jesus Christ in the advancing of His kingdom against the forces of darkness.

Jesus recognized that such disconnection and call to duty required of His faithful disciple, a soldier in His active service, is not easy. As He and His disciples were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Permit me first to go and bury my father." But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." And another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57–62)

In the parable of the soils, Jesus identifies false believers whose non-saving faith is short-lived with "the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). Those are the kind of temporary professing Christians of whom Peter speaks: "If after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first" (2 Peter 2:20).

"The worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches" of which Jesus spoke are among the affairs of everyday life that can keep an unbeliever from receiving Christ and can keep believers from faithfully serving Him. Just as the dutiful soldier places his life willingly on the line in service of his country, so the faithful Christian will willingly "deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow [Christ]" (Matt. 16:24). He will say with Paul, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:24).

3.	The third mark of a good soldier is _	
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In the same way, but of far greater importance, a Christian's deepest desire is to please the Lord Jesus Christ, his commander in chief, the one who enlisted him. It is impossible to serve

two commanders in chief, just as it is impossible to serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). The faithful Christian's fondest hope is to be rewarded for loyal service and to hear his Master say, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:21).

The strong desire to please other people is an integral characteristic of fallen man. And because of the continued influence of the old self (Eph. 4:22), even Christians are tempted to be menpleasers. Many Christians succumb to that temptation and become more concerned about pleasing their fellow workers, their neighbors, and their friends than about pleasing the Lord. And for the same reason, many pastors fall into the trap of wanting to please their congregations or their communities more than to please the Lord. That desire inevitably leads to moral and spiritual decline, because pleasing the world, including worldly Christians, demands compromise of God's truth, God's standards, and personal holiness. It demands forsaking Christ as our first love. From the situation of the Ephesian church some years after Paul wrote this letter to Timothy (who was pastoring in Ephesus), we know that forsaking Christ as our first love is possible even when our doctrine is sound and we toil and persevere for Him (see Rev. 2:2-4). When that happens, we must "remember therefore from where [we] have fallen, and repent" (v. 5). We must remind ourselves of Paul's sobering testimony: "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). When Christ is our first love, we will "have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Thess. 2:4).

2. THE ATHLETE (2:5)

Another figure Paul uses to illustrate characteristics of a strong spiritual life is that of *an athlete*, a metaphor he uses several times in his letters. The phrase *competes as an athlete* translates the verb *athleō*, which means to contest, contend, wrestle, struggle. The idea is that of a struggle that requires great determination to win. Athletes struggle, contend, compete, and strive to win.

The difference between first and second places in an athletic event is not always a matter of talent. As in the fable of the tortoise and the hare, a less gifted athlete often surpasses another who is physically superior and more experienced, simply by having greater determination and persistence.

While watching a decathlon meet between the United States, Poland, and the U.S.S.R., I asked a friend, who was coaching the American team, to identify the best athlete among all those competitors. He pointed to a slender, lithe young man, and I asked, "Do you think he will win today?" Surprisingly, he answered, "No." When I asked why, he pointed to another athlete and said, "He's going to win, because he has the greatest determination, the strongest will to win. He is the most mentally tough competitor I have ever seen." Sure enough, he did win that day. His name was Bruce Jenner, and two years later he won the Olympic gold medal in the decathlon, which ranked him as the greatest athlete in the world.

Our spiritual competition is not, of course, against other Christians. Trying to outperform another believer is far from spiritual. Rather, our competition is against our fleshly old self, against the world, and against Satan and those who serve him. And our goal is to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Even the most gifted and determined *athlete*, bringing the most effort to the struggle, however, *does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules*. In the Greek games, which continued for centuries under Roman rule and were still being held in Paul's time, every participant had to meet three qualifications—of birth, of training, and of competition. First, he had to be a true-born Greek. Second, he had to prepare at least ten months for the games and swear to that before a statue of Zeus. Third, he had to compete within the specific rules for a given event. To fail in any of those requirements meant automatic disqualification.

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The very fact that we are Christians means we have met the qualification of being born again. But the other two requirements are far from automatic and involve constant dedication and constant effort. Together they constitute spiritual discipline, which comes from the same root as "disciple" and is the foundation of spiritual maturity. The disciplined disciple has control of his affections, his emotions, his priorities, and his objectives.

It goes without saying that all serious athletes must exert special effort not just during a game or a race but for many months, even years, beforehand. Writing to believers at Corinth, who were very familiar with the Isthmian games, which were played nearby, Paul asked rhetorically, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:24–27). Paul's victory in the realm of ministry was dependent on his body, with its lusts and impulses, not being in control of him, but rather he of it.

As Paul emphasizes in that passage, the wreath for which the Greek athletes competed was perishable, but the one for which the spiritual Christian competes is imperishable. It is "the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8), "the unfading crown of glory" we will receive "when the Chief Shepherd appears" (1 Peter 5:4), "the crown of life,

which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10). One day, like the twenty-four elders, we "will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast [our] crowns before the throne" (Rev. 4:10).

Conclusion

This section is best understood when placed within the larger biblical-theological purview of the letter. It is precisely because the end times are upon Timothy and the church that he must be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus (v. 1); that he must find faithful men to perpetuate the message (v. 2); and that qualities such as single-mindedness (v. 4), integrity (v. 5), and hard work (v. 6) are of supreme importance. This end-time orbit explains the urgency and intensity of Paul's instructions, an urgency and intensity that are often lacking in complacent Christianity today but that need to be recovered if the church wants to be a factor in the rapidly unraveling moral fabric of the surrounding culture and bear bold witness to the Lord Jesus Christ.³

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, <u>1-2 Timothy & Titus</u>, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 231–232.

Lesson 5 (9-17-23)

Endure for the Gospel: Part 2 (2 Tim. 2:6-7)

⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

To inspire Timothy for faithfulness in ministry, Paul uses three simple but powerful images: the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. These are some of Paul's favorite images, and he uses them elsewhere to illustrate various truths. Not everyone serves in the military, competes as an athlete, or works as a farmer, but the analogies Paul draws serve as representative examples of the types of qualities believers, and Christian leaders in particular, ought to cultivate.

Discussion Questions

How are Christians and farmers alike? How are they different?

How is the farmer unlike the soldier and the athlete?

What does the example of the farmer teach about the Christian life?

Should the imperative in verse 7 (*Think over what I say*) be considered as general advice or as a strong admonition?

Have you made it a habit to "think over" what God has said? Has he given you understanding as a result? Share an example.

Was there anything from last week's sermon that was especially challenging? Convicting? Encouraging?

¹ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, <u>Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus</u> (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 164.

² Andreas J. Köstenberger, <u>1-2 Timothy & Titus</u>, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 229.

Lesson Outline [This lesson was adapted from *John F. MacArthur Jr., <u>2 Timothy</u>, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995)*]

3. THE FARMER (2:6)

The fourth and final familiar image Paul uses to illustrate characteristics of a strong spiritual life is that of a *farmer*. The farmer works to gain the crop for himself. That is how he makes his living. In New Testament times, farm laborers often were paid with a portion of the crops they helped to plant, cultivate, and harvest. The *hard-working farmer* received not only a greater share but also *the first ... share of the crops*. The teacher has reward in knowing he has enriched the lives of his students, the soldier has the reward of pleasing his commander in chief, the athlete has the reward of a trophy, and the farmer has the reward of the first and best share of the crops.

Hard-working is a participle form of the verb kopiaō, which means to toil intensely, to sweat and strain to the point of exhaustion if necessary. The industrious farmer starts his hard and demanding work early and quits late. He endures the cold, the heat, the rain, and the drought. He plows the soil whether it is hard or loose. He does not wait for his own convenience, because the seasons do not wait for him. When the time comes to plant, he must plant; when weeds appear, he must remove them; and when the crop is mature, he must harvest it. What drives the man to such hard toil is the harvest.

The teacher often finds exhilaration in the aspiring minds of his students, the soldier often has the excitement of battle, and the athlete the thrill of competing. But most of a farmer's working hours are tedious, humdrum, and unexciting. And, unlike the teacher, the soldier, and the athlete, a farmer often works alone. He has no students to stimulate him, no fellow soldiers to fight with him, no teammates or crowd to cheer him.

Many Christians' lives are like the farmer's. Although there may be occasional times of excitement and special satisfaction, the daily routine is often, in itself, unattractive and unrewarding. But whatever their day-to-day responsibilities may involve, all faithful believers are promised God's blessing and reward. We may be underpaid, treated unfairly by our boss or fellow employees, and misunderstood or unappreciated by fellow Christians. But Christ's reward to His faithful disciples is never deficient, never unfair, never late, and never omitted.

Our good works have nothing to do with keeping our salvation, no more than they had anything to do with our receiving salvation. But they have everything to do with working out our salvation (Phil. 2:12). Not only are "we ... [God's] workmanship," Paul reminds us, but we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). When believers stand before the Lord's judgment seat, His *bēma*, "each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:13–14).

There are certain things the spiritual Christian has to endure, such as suffering for the faith. There are certain things he has to avoid, such as becoming entangled with the affairs of the world. There are certain mandates he has to obey, namely, the commands of his Lord. There are certain things he has to do, including tasks that seem mundane and ordinary. And, just as surely, there are things he will be given to enjoy, the victory and the rewards of a dedicated, selfless, and disciplined life. Through His apostle, the Lord assures us: "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

VERSE 7

Consider what I say, Paul continues. The verb noeō (consider) is used only here in the New Testament. It denotes perceiving clearly with the mind, of understanding fully, of considering carefully, of pondering and mulling over. The form here is an imperative, indicating that Paul was giving a strong admonition, not mere advice.

The apostle was saying to Timothy, and still says to believers today: "Under the Lord, think over and carefully ponder what I have been saying. Look at your own life and ask yourself if you are a strong Christian, a spiritual Christian, a mature Christian. Are you devoting yourself to guarding and teaching God's Word? Do you deny yourself and count your life as nothing in order to faithfully serve the Lord? Do you keep a distance between yourself and the affairs of the world? Do you continually prepare yourself to serve your Master? Do you understand self-denial and self-sacrifice? Are you willing to pay the price that He demands?"

"If you can answer yes to those questions," we are promised, the Lord will give you understanding in everything. You will be led with wisdom and insight through the challenges to victory.

Conclusion

With three quickly stated illustrations, Paul outlines the internal discipline of the soldier, the athlete and the farmer. Each has to put their own pleasure and comfort aside as they undertake their task faithfully. The soldier must avoid civilian distractions, the athlete illegal shortcuts and the farmer laziness. So, a good soldier of Christ Jesus will keep his eyes on pleasing the Lord Jesus and not get distracted by or over-involved in the things of this life.

The ordinariness of the ministry of the gospel—that the work of teaching God's word can be paralleled to other activities like soldiers, athletes and farmers—may seem strange to some people. But the world that God created works along certain lines and, though the ministry of the gospel has a decidedly supernatural character to it, it respects the normal parameters of the created order...Not everything that can be known, even about Christian ministry, is in the

Scriptures. Everything we need to know is there, but our task is to think on the basis of that knowledge, and trust God to help us understand.³

Commenting on verse 7, Daniel Akin notes, "Here is Bible Study 101! Students of Scripture must 'consider' God's Word carefully in order to understand it. Students of Scripture should also study with this promise in view: 'The Lord will give you understanding in everything.' Do not be lazy in Bible study. Work hard and believe that God will help you uncover its truths. To be a great student of Scripture, you need hard work and a heart of humility."⁴

³ Phillip D. Jensen, <u>1 & 2 Timothy for You</u>, ed. Carl Laferton, God's Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2019), 154–155.

⁴ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, <u>Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus</u> (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 166–167.

Lesson 6 (9-24-23)

The Essential Memory (2 Tim. 2:8-13)

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

- if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;
- if we are faithless, he remains faithful—

for he cannot deny himself.

The present text continues Paul's call to Timothy to share in his suffering. The centerpiece of this text is the sole "trustworthy saying" in this epistle in vv. 11–13. In an intriguing progression the saying reinforces both the notions of the need for human faithfulness and the reality of God's faithfulness even in the midst of human unfaithfulness. This puts the emphasis squarely on God.¹

Discussion Questions

In spite of his suffering, what keeps Paul from giving up (2:8-10)? What has kept you going in times of suffering?

Of all the things Paul could have said about Christ, why does he describe Him as "descended from David" in 2:8? Why is this fact relevant?

Paul's own example should also motivate Timothy. How would you describe Paul's attitude toward circumstances in 2:9–10? According to these verses, what convictions enable and motivate Paul to have this attitude?

How does your understanding of election (v. 10) fuel your desire to share the gospel?

¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, <u>1-2 Timothy & Titus</u>, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 233.

How should Christ's character, actions, and promises encourage Timothy (2:8, 11–13)?

The "trustworthy" saying in 2 Timothy 2:11–13 summarizes believers' glorious hope that they will live and reign with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Rev. 20:4); it warns that Christ will deny those who deny him (see Matt. 10:32–33); and it reassures us of Christ's faithfulness, which does not change even if we are faithless. How is God's unchanging nature both a comfort and a warning?

Why is remembering the great acts of God essential to the spiritual well-being of God's children?

Was there anything from last week's sermon that was especially challenging? Convicting? Encouraging?

Lesson Outline [This lesson was adapted from *R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell,* <u>1 & 2 Timothy</u> <u>and Titus: To Guard the Deposit</u>, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000)]

It is apparent from the Old Testament that remembering the great acts of God is essential to the spiritual well-being of God's children. In fact, God is very directive about this.

The Passover. On the night before the Exodus, when God instituted the Passover rite as a perpetual ceremony in Israel, he instructed Moses to say, "And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians' " (Exodus 12:26, 27). Passover was meant to bring about heartening spiritual memory and reflection.

The Law. Later, after God thundered the Ten Commandments from Sinai and charged Israel with the Shema and specific instructions to "impress them on your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7ff.), Moses went on to say: In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders—great and terrible—upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers." (Deuteronomy 6:20–23) Again we see the value of memory and reflection.

Crossing the Jordan. The most notable example of God's concern for his people's memory was at the crossing of the Jordan, when he instructed the priests of Israel to take twelve stones

from the Jordan and pile them in Gilgal in the Promised Land. His subsequent instructions were explicit: "In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever" (Joshua 4:6, 7). The Israelites were to look on the stones and remember that they did not get across the Jordan through their own ability. It was all the work of God. And realizing this, they were to conduct all of life accordingly, whether warfare, business, or family life.

Why all this emphasis on remembering? Because God's children have always tended to forget the wonderful things he has done. The seventy-two verses of Psalm 78 mourn Israel's tendency to forget God's faithfulness. Verses 10, 11 sum it up: They did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them. We present-day children of God confirm our sad continuity with the children of old by our forgetfulness of things that were once so vivid and vital to our faith and way of life.

But the emphasis here in 2 Timothy 2 is altogether positive! Those who remember what God has done, those who cultivate the memory of God's great works on their behalf, will live to God's glory. The Apostle Peter did just this when he remembered how God preserved Noah and delivered Lot and concluded with a resounding statement of confidence: "if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials" (2 Peter 2:9). "If God did it for them, he will do it for us!" How important theological memory is.

This matter of remembering was on Paul's mind as he wrote his second letter to Timothy. Immediately after the greeting, he heartened Timothy by calling to memory the faith of their forefathers (1:3), his and Timothy's own deep friendship (1:4), Timothy's rich spiritual heritage (1:5), the day of Timothy's call and gifting for ministry (1:6, 7; cf. 3:14, 15), and lastly the pattern of sound teaching he had given Timothy (1:13). Remember, remember, remember, remember.

1. REMEMBER THE _____ (v. 8a)

Beginning with verse 8, Paul again takes up the emphasis on godly memory by urging upon Timothy the grand essential memory—"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel." This is the first and foremost of three successive memories essential to standing tall and suffering for Christ...

The command to "Remember Jesus Christ" calls for the remembrance of two things: First, he was "raised from the dead," and, second, he was "descended from David." These dual remembrances correspond to his two names "Jesus" and "Christ." "Jesus" (his human name given him at his birth) matches "raised from the dead." "Christ" (which means "Messiah") matches "descended from David." Interestingly, in the rest of 2 Timothy Paul uses the term "Christ Jesus," but here he says "Jesus Christ" to correspond to the order of his emphases.

Remember his ______. The initial emphasis is on Christ's resurrection, "Remember Jesus ... raised from the dead." The tense of "raised from the dead" is the Greek perfect, which means he was raised and still is raised. The reason to remember the Resurrection is that Jesus' resurrection proved the gospel message. Paul had said, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:14). But he had been raised, as Paul so vigorously argues in that same chapter (cf. vv. 3–8). This resurrection substantiated the gospel.

Jesus' resurrection demonstrated the gospel's power. The good news of the gospel itself brings about the power for resurrection—spiritual resurrection—as Paul proclaimed to the Romans: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (6:4). He later explained this to the Ephesians as well: "That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:19b, 20). All those who have been born again have experienced this resurrection power.

Furthermore, ultimately Jesus' resurrection means power for *bodily* resurrections—"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:20–22). Memory of Jesus' resurrection therefore engenders a perpetual Easter season in the lives of his children. It invites spiritual resurrections when through the good news people believe and are born again. And it instills hope of a glorious bodily resurrection for all who believe—eternal Easter! "Remember Jesus … risen from the dead."

. The parallel emphasis is on remembering our Savior's messiahship. The title "Christ" always means "Messiah." So the sense here is, "Remember ... Christ [Messiah] ... descended from David." Jesus Christ fulfilled the Davidic covenant, the promise first made to King David in 2 Samuel 7:12ff. and repeatedly reiterated throughout the Old Testament: A descendant of David would reign forever.

Significantly it was after his resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, that Jesus explained, "'Did not the Christ [Messiah] have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:26, 27). Memory of Jesus' messiahship invites the believer to see Jesus as the culmination of God's plan of salvation and to bow before him as King.

"My gospel." It is important for us to realize that these two things—his resurrection and his messiahship—make up the essential gospel. Paul says, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel" (v. 8, italics added). Certainly there are other elements in the gospel (Christ's atoning death, imputed righteousness that comes by faith alone through Christ alone, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and so on), but this is

shorthand for the whole thing. "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel."

Paul makes this essentiality clear in two other places in the New Testament. Notice the occurrences of the signature words and motifs (the gospel, Christ, descendant of David, resurrection) in Romans 1:1–4: Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Note the similarities in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4: Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ [Messiah] died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

This is the good news: Jesus Christ is the predicted, long-awaited Messiah, and he has been raised from the dead and ever lives. This is the gospel. Everything else in the gospel is implicit in and flows from these two supreme realities. As Messiah, he fulfills the cascade of Old Testament messianic prophecy and the gospel and is King of kings and Lord of lords. As resurrected Lord, all authority in heaven and earth is his (cf. Matthew 28:18). He is victor. He is all-powerful. It is this good news that Paul himself clings to as his death approaches. This is the theological reality from which he takes strength.

We must keep before us that Paul's command "Remember" is a continuous command. Timothy is to "remember [and keep on remembering] Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David." Other recollections are important, but this is *the* essential memory. This gospel memory, constantly replayed, will enable him to stand and suffer with Paul. Jesus Christ is the resurrected, living Messiah. He is everything we need for life and salvation.

This is the theological memory that we must constantly set before us in all of its Scriptural dimensions. Jesus Christ did not come out of nowhere. He is the fulfillment of everything the Scriptures pointed to concerning the Messiah. Jesus Christ was resurrected and remains so. He lives! He is all-powerful! Keep on remembering this.

2. REMEMBER THE GOSPEL'S _____ (vv. 8b-10)

The theological grounds for suffering were more than theory for Paul. His own present experience bore witness to the reality of the Resurrection and the availability of power to stand and suffer. So Paul had a right to affirm the gospel's power in suffering: "This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's

word is not chained" (vv. 8b, 9). Paul's circumstances were humiliating and personally repugnant to him because he was considered to be a criminal. The word translated "criminal" is a strong one, a technical term used for violent people—murderers, thieves, traitors who were punished by torture.

Nero had just burned Rome (A.D. 64) and blamed the Christians, of whom Paul was a leader. Thus Paul was chained and treated like criminal scum. All this for the gospel. But there was no hint of self-pity in Paul. Rather, there was confident power: "But God's word is not chained." A famous picture in the convent library in Erfurt, Germany, depicts young Martin Luther poring over a copy of Scripture in the morning light. The dawn steals through the open lattice, illuminating the Bible and his eager face. A broken chain hangs from the Bible. Such has been the experience of the church, even in darkest times.

The unchained Word here in 2 Timothy is the gospel. God's Word ("my gospel") had not been and was not then chained. Paul was speaking from experience. During his first Roman imprisonment, he wrote to the Philippians: Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. (1:12–14)

In fact, in Paul's present imprisonment the Lord had stood by his side and had given him the strength to proclaim the message before the Roman court, as he reports in 2 Timothy 4:16, 17. Paul was powerfully stating the absolute freedom of the Word of God. And it is so today. In the 1930s Stalin ordered a purge of all Bibles and all believers. In Stavropol, Russia, this order was carried out with a vengeance. Thousands of Bibles were confiscated, and multitudes of believers were sent to the gulags where many died for being "enemies of the state."

After the fall of Communism, the missionary organization CoMission sent a team to Stavropol. (The city's history was not known to them at that time.) When the team experienced difficulty getting Bibles shipped from Moscow, someone mentioned a warehouse outside of town where confiscated Bibles had been stored since Stalin's day. After prayer, one member got up the courage to go to the warehouse and ask the officials if the Bibles were still there. They were! They then asked if the Bibles could be removed and distributed again to the people of Stavropol. The answer was yes. A truck was obtained, and several Russian people helped load the Bibles.

One of the helpers was a young man—a skeptical, hostile, agnostic collegian who had come only for the day's wages. As they were loading Bibles, the young man disappeared. They found him in a corner of the warehouse, weeping. He had slipped away, hoping to quietly take a Bible for himself. What he found shook him to the core. The inside page of the Bible he picked up had the handwritten signature of his own grandmother! It had been her personal Bible. He had stolen the very Bible that had belonged to his grandmother—a

woman persecuted for her faith all her life. His grandmother had no doubt prayed for him and for her city.

God's Word can no more be chained than God himself. Thus Paul declares that God gives us the power to suffer: "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (v. 10). The unutterable, unstoppable power of the Word means that it will prevail with "the elect" so that they will be saved and brought to eternal glory. The mighty, effectual Word gives us a reason to "endure"—and Paul does. And Timothy will likewise stand tall as he wields the unchained Word.

3. REMEMBER THE	(vv. 11–13)
	ishment to stand and suffer with him (which began in 1:4)
with an easy-to-remember poer	m. Each stanza begins with an "if" that describes the
believer's actions and is followe	d by a responding phrase that gives Christ's response.
11b). This is a poetic reference to baptismal imagery to describe coalmost identical with this stanzalive with him." In both Romans and	
12a). This plainly addresses Pau himself in verse 10: "Therefore particularly during affliction, and because it goes beyond being w reward. Jesus was specific abou say, "Well done, my good serval matter, take charge of ten cities Those who endure will be his co): "If we endure, we will also reign with him" (v. I's main concern. "Endure" is the word he uses to describe I endure everything." It means to hold your ground, dit involves suffering. The reward for this amazes us—rith him to reigning with him! This is not a "pie-in-the-sky" t this in the parable of the minas, where he has the master nt! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small so" (Luke 19:17). Co-regency speaks of privileged intimacy. Or-reigning viceroys and confidants. What joy! The eternal at to eternal responsibility as Christ's co-regents, teaming less.
Paul here references Jesus' well will also acknowledge him before men, I will disown him before meny has a wide range of meani	

denies those who do it, 2) because of the close similarity with Jesus' saying, and 3) because the fourth stanza refers to temporary unfaithfulness.

This is an ominous declaration for the likes of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who will be mentioned in verses 17, 18. The warning is in the future tense: "If we [will] disown him, he will also disown us." The terror that will unfold in final judgment is a reciprocal, eternal disownment. The stakes were high for Timothy, and they remain equally high today.

Why is God like this? The magnificent coda tells us—"for he cannot disown himself." His faithfulness is rooted deep within his graciousness as the covenantal God who always acts in conformity to his nature. What God is, he always is. No man is always himself, but God is always himself—he cannot be untrue to his own nature. As the saintly Samuel Rutherford, who spent years in an Aberdeen prison, wrote, "Often and often, I have in my folly torn up my copy of God's covenant with me; but, blessed be His name, He keeps it in heaven safe; and He stands by it always."

Conclusion

Timothy (and all of like flesh and aspiration) can find courage from these wonderful "hang in there" lines. This is all so beautiful. These memories are essential for standing and suffering. The first is most essential. *Remember the gospel*: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel" (v. 8). Remember that he is the Messiah who fulfills all the promises of salvation. And remember that he is resurrected, that he is living today. This is the essential gospel. Hang on to it, and keep on remembering it.

Next, remember the gospel's power in Paul's life: "This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's Word is not chained" (vv. 8b, 9). As Luther said, "The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still: His kingdom is forever." This gospel also gives us the power to suffer: "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (v. 10). Then comes a poem to seal this to our souls:

If we died with him,
we will also live with him;
if we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;
if we are faithless,
he will remain faithful,
for he cannot disown himself. (vv. 11–13)

Lesson 7 (10-1-23) Handling God's Word (2 Tim. 2:14-19)

¹⁴ Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶ But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. ¹⁹ But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

In these verses there is sharp contrast between two types of teachers or two types of workmen. There are good workmen and bad workmen. The good workmen are devoted to "the Word of truth." The good workmen are also "approved," having been tested like metals or coins, being recognized as "sterling" (Stott, *Message*, 66). In contrast the bad workmen are not devoted to the truth (vv. 16–18). They are not approved because they fail the test of authenticity. Consequently, the good workmen stand unashamed whereas the bad workmen should be deeply ashamed.

Timothy is to stand as a model for the unashamed workman (if he followed Paul's instruction) who handled the Word of truth rightly and was thus approved by God. Hymenaeus and Philetus were examples of those who were unapproved because they were not devoted to the Word of truth and their teaching damaged people.¹

Discussion Questions

Paul wants Timothy to remind the people he leads of "these things" (2:14). What are "these things"? (See 2:11–13.)

What warning is Paul giving his fellow Christians in verse 14?

Is the pastor the only spiritual "workman" in the body of Christ? In what ways do others toil in the work of the kingdom?

According to verses 15-16 and 22-24, what should you pursue and what should you flee?

¹ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, <u>Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus</u> (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 172.

What does it mean to "rightly handle the word of truth" (2:15)?

According to 2:14, 16, 23, why should Christians avoid ignorant speculations and quarrels about words?

Give one example of "quarreling about words" (2:14), "irreverent babble" (2:16), or "ignorant controversies" (2:23) from your own experience.

Do you think 2:14, 16, and 23 rule out debate or argument of every kind? If so, why? If not, what kinds of debate are acceptable for Christians?

What is the role of Christian apologetics—reasoned arguments to justify Christianity—in evangelism?

Why does it seem that false teaching spreads more easily and quickly than sound doctrine?

Was there anything from last week's sermon that was especially challenging? Convicting? Encouraging?

Lesson Outline [This lesson was adapted from *R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell,* <u>1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit</u>, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000)]

Memorization, and the cultivation of memory, was an essential pursuit in ancient culture right up to the invention of the printed page.

Daniel Boorstin tells us in his book *The Discoverers* that the elder Seneca (whose life was contemporary to that of our Lord, c. 55 B.C.-A.D. 37) was reportedly able to repeat long passages of speeches he had heard only once many years before. He would impress his large class of students of rhetoric by asking each of the 200 members to recite a line of poetry. Then he would repeat word for word all the lines they had quoted—in reverse order, from last to first!

St. Augustine, who had also been a teacher of rhetoric, told of his admiration for a friend who could recite the whole text of Virgil backwards! The biographers of Thomas Aquinas boasted that he remembered everything his teachers had ever told him in school. The sayings of the

church fathers that Thomas collected for Pope Urban IV, after his visits to the great monastic libraries, came not from notes (he needed no notes) but simply from what he had seen.

Early Hebrew Biblical culture relied on memory, what we call oral tradition, when no one could possibly own a personal copy of the Torah and the developing canon. Of course, in the first century when Paul wrote Timothy it was much the same.

So we see that the trustworthy saying in verses 11–13 (rendered in easy-to-remember verse) was helpful for spiritual growth. The poem was easy to remember because it hung on four simple words—*died, endure, disown,* and *faithless*. The overall message of the poem was one of encouragement, with only one line given to warning. Its rhythm throbs with spiritual sustenance. We would do well to memorize it for ourselves.

Now in verse 14, as Paul leaves off his extended appeal to Timothy to stand tall and suffer (1:4–2:13) and turns to his overarching concern of countering false teachers who subvert the Word, he commands Timothy to "Keep reminding them of these things" (v. 14a)—that is, to keep reminding the Ephesian church of the faithful saying, of both its comfort to believers and its warning to apostates. "Keep reminding the church of what is at stake."

1. ABOUT _____ (v. 14)

At the same time that Timothy was charged to "keep reminding" the Ephesians of the faithful saying, he was also to "Warn them before God against quarreling about words" (v. 14b)— literally, "word fights." Word fights seem so intellectual. Such arguing can be so nuanced and ego-puffing with its tangled subtleties. It can foster a kind of "theological discussion which is in the end purely verbal, having nothing to do with the realities of the Christian religion" (Kelly). Word fights are the feast of dilettantes.

Paul adds, "It ["quarreling about words"] is of no value, and only ruins those who listen" (v. 14c). Paul had described the ruin that comes from quarreling over words earlier, in his first letter to Timothy, when he said that the one who teaches false doctrine "has an unhealthy interest in controversies and arguments [same word—"word fights"] that result in envy, quarreling, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind" (1 Timothy 6:4, 5). Hassle follows hassle, producing perpetual ruinous conflict.

Later, when advising Titus about similar people, Paul ordered, "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned" (Titus 3:10, 11). Notice in the present text that Timothy is told to "Warn them before God" (v. 14a). Quarreling over words is a very grave matter. God himself will call such "word-warriors" into account. Remember this when you encounter people like this in the church or at your door.

2. ABOUT	(v. 15
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Paul's warning to the word-warriors in Ephesus is closely followed by a very personal (and famous) command to Timothy: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (v. 15).

Give It Straight

Being one who "correctly handles" the Word requires getting it straight and giving it straight. "Correctly handles" has as its basis the Greek word *orthos* ("straight"), the same word from which we build words like *orthopedic* and *orthodoxy*. The exact charge to Timothy is to "impart the word of truth *without deviation, straight, undiluted*." Here it refers to the straight, precise, careful communication of the word of truth, the gospel (cf. Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5), which both have "the word of truth, the gospel"). This apostolic command to get it and give it straight has become a 2,000-year-old charge to all who are called to teach and preach the gospel.

Sadly, as discussed earlier, this flies directly in the face of so much that is happening today in our churches, where instead of faithful exposition there is "disexposition." The text is announced and read, and it is so rich and promising. You settle back, Bible open, for a good Sunday meal, only to find that the text is departed from, never to return. Disexposition! Sunday indigestion!

On other occasions you have experienced gospel disexposition where, no matter what the text, the preacher always encrusted it with the same string of gospel texts, so that all his sermons sounded the same. As a result, the hearers suffer a kind of gospel brain death. Some Christians may have sat under the same preacher for years, but they cannot recall anything specific they learned from his sermons! Some disexposition parades as exposition in which the text is referred to, but there is no rigor, no engagement with the text in its context, no attempt to convey what it really said then or says today—only well-traveled bromides. Disexposition invites multiple abuses of the text, some of which have been listed by Peter Adam in his book *Speaking God's Words*.

De-contexted. Scripture is often wrenched from its context and mistakenly and obviously misapplied, like the preacher who used Revelation 11:10 (KIV) as a Christmas text: "And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another." The preacher neglected to include the final clause of the verse: "because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth." "Have yourself a very merry Christmas."

Lensed. Sometimes the text is errantly viewed through a favorite lens—psychological, therapeutic, political, chauvinistic, social, or domestic—so that no matter what text the preacher began with, the sermon always ends up on the home or the flag or wholeness. The psychologized lens is especially pernicious because the hearer may not recognize the psychological subtext that is being read into the passage.

Moralized. In this type of mistaken preaching, the text is subjected to moralizing. For example, Paul's words in Philippians 3:13 (KIV), "this one thing I do," are taken to teach the importance of having goals. Thus the pastor preaches on goal-setting without once referencing Paul's magnificent goal: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (3:13, 14).

Doctrinalized. Scripture is sometimes mistakenly organized into an array of proof-texts to promote the doctrinal preferences of the preacher.

Silenced. Some preach on Scripture's silences, the gaps in God's Word—"Now the Bible doesn't tell us how Mary felt about this. But we may be sure she felt ... and therefore we ought to ..."

Sermons have actually been preached from the perspective of the "lowing oxen"!

How far all this is from the call to be one "who correctly handles the word of truth"—who gets it and gives it straight. How far Paul's exhortation is from so much of today's preaching, which, as William Willimon has said, reduces "salvation to self-esteem, sin to maladjustment, church to group therapy, and Jesus to Dear Abby."

Work Hard

Much of the contemporary disexpositional disaster would find alleviation if Paul's command to Timothy here was obeyed: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed" (v. 15a).

The preacher must be given to hard, hard work. And that is what I think is the great problem with preaching today—homiletical sloth. Possibly this is because some believe that the homiletical payoff does not merit the added work. It is God before whom we all will stand; it is God before whom we must not be ashamed. This command draws the picture of a workman who has done his work well and therefore can submit it to his superior without hesitation or embarrassment...

3. ABOUT				(vv	(vv. 16–18)		
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Having instructed Timothy to warn the Ephesians about mishandling God's Word in their word fights, and having instructed Timothy on how to correctly handle the Word of truth, Paul returns to the subject of mishandling it through too much talk: "Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly" (v. 16). What is so bad about such "chatter"?

It brings ungodliness. Paul is using cutting, slashing sarcasm because the assertion that they "will become" is literally "will advance" or "will make progress" (apparently a slogan the false teachers used to describe their teaching). But here the movement is downward—to ungodliness. Fee calls this "a fine piece of irony." Because "godless chatter" is not godly talk, it is against God—it is godless, trivial chatterings. For such chatterers, words become substitutes

for deeds. An abundance of theological chatter produces clever, speculative, intellectually reckless, and spiritually destructive talk. An unfailing test for what takes place in our Bible studies and small groups, and the times we characteristically call "fellowship," is: Has it moved us closer to God and elevated our conversation and conduct? "Godless chatter" comes from godless chatterboxes whose drivel leads to increasing ungodliness.

It is gangrenous. Paul's biting sarcasm is followed by a repulsive metaphor: "Their teaching will spread like gangrene" (v. 17a). The metaphorical language is thoroughly unpleasant. "Their teaching will spread [literally, "have pasture"] like gangrene." The picture either is of gangrene spreading like a flock of sheep pouring into an open pasture or of sheep devouring new fodder. Either way the image is meant to be repulsive.

Two of the principal purveyors of this infection ooze with heresy: "Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some" (vv. 17b, 18). We have already met Hymenaeus in 1 Timothy 1:20, where Paul states he had excommunicated him and Alexander. Now Hymenaeus has a new sidekick, and they are working hard to spread a virulent infection. Times are still tough in Ephesus.

Their insistence that "the resurrection has already taken place" was not primarily about Christ's resurrection. Rather, their insistence was that the final resurrection, the great resurrection of the living and the dead, had taken place *spiritually* for all believers. It was over, they claimed, and all the promised end-time, eternal realizations were now theirs.

The damning thing about this teaching (apart from its plain untruthfulness) is that it attacked the reality of Jesus' *physical* resurrection. The physical resurrection of believers is so linked to Christ's that if Christians are not physically resurrected, that would prove Christ had not been bodily resurrected either. As Paul argued, "But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:12–14).

This gangrenous teaching had been sugarcoated and wrapped in Hymenaeus' and Philetus' smiling declaration that they had the fullness of the resurrection *now*—all its health, all its wealth, all its privilege, all its power. This was the good news, they said. Paul's preaching? Why, his circumstances—he was in prison!—gave it the lie. If he had the authentic good news, he would be living like them! Of course, their so-called gospel was pure, unadulterated anthrax, and with it "they destroy[ed] the faith of some."

4. <i>ABOUT</i>	(v. 19)
How will it turn	out for those who mishandle the Word with their word fights and "s

How will it turn out for those who mishandle the Word with their word fights and "godless chatter," as opposed to the believer who "correctly handles the word of truth"—those who get it straight and give it straight?

In answer, Paul deftly references a famous event in Israel's history—the rebellion of Korah, as described in Numbers 16. There the Levites Korah and Dathan and Abiram and some 250 other leaders rose up against Moses' leadership in an effort to take over the priesthood. "They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?' " (Numbers 16:3).

At this Moses fell facedown before God. "Then he said to Korah and all his followers: 'In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him" (v. 5). Then Moses set up a confrontation. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families and the 250 leaders were to present themselves carrying priestly censers and stand before Aaron and his priests bearing their censers.

At the appointed moment the glory of the Lord appeared, and the Lord ordered Moses and the rest of the congregation to distance themselves from the rebels. So all moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Moses mightily prophesied, and the earth split apart like a great mouth and swallowed their tents, livestock, and families—every trace of them. "At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, 'The earth is going to swallow us too!' " (v. 34). Then fire roared down from Heaven on the 250 leaders, incinerating them. All that remained were their red-hot censers, which were gathered and hammered out to overlay the altar.

God had delivered Moses from the rebellious usurpers, vindicating Moses' words to Korah the day before: "In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him" (Numbers 16:5; literally, in the Septuagint, "the LORD knows those who are his"; cf. 2 Timothy 2:19). How will it turn out for Paul and Timothy in relation to those who are rebelling against God's Word, men like Hymenaeus and Philetus? Paul gives the answer: "Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm." That is, the true believers of the church of Ephesus, those not swayed by heresy, will stand firm. The "foundation" (the faithful Christians at Ephesus) is inscribed with a dual inscription—first about God's knowledge and then about mankind's duty.

First, regarding *God's knowledge*: "The Lord knows those who are his." Paul quotes Moses' reproof to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram at their rebellion (and by application reproves Hymenaeus and Philetus). At the same time these words are a sovereign comfort to the church—"The Lord knows those who are his." When the ultimate fires of judgment fall, and the cosmos is but a cinder, the Lord will know who are his. Jesus had earlier said to his own, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (John 10:14, 15). So deep is God's knowledge of his own that it is explained in the analogy of the mutual knowledge of the Holy Trinity. Some think that "The Lord knows those who are his."

Second, regarding *man's duty*: "'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness' " (v. 19b). Those who would take comfort in the first inscription must take responsibility for the second. This is proverbial too, because that is the way it is with true believers—they "turn away from wickedness." Knowing the deep things about God demands deep things from us. There is no *election* (cf. v. 10) apart from *sanctification*. It is written on our souls.

Conclusion

So the handling of the Word is paramount. Whether preacher or layperson, we must not duck our privilege and responsibility to "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (v. 15).

We must get it straight and give it straight. We must apply it straight to our souls, as it is. Forget the word-warring and the "godless chatter." Do your best to "present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed." Read it. Meditate on it. Memorize it. "He will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (v. 13). Do not forget. "The Lord knows those who are his." Paul remembered that. So should we.

Appendix: Answer Guide

Lesson 1: The Making of a Gospel-Centered Leader (2 Tim. 1:1-7)

- A. Paul: Called by the Will of God (1:1)
- 3. The origin of Paul's apostleship (1:1b).
- 4. The **purpose** of Paul's apostleship (1:1c).
- B. Timothy: **Shaped** by the **Grace** of God (1:2–7)
- 4. A personal **mentor** (1:2-4).
- 5. A godly **mother** (1:5).
- 6. The **Spirit** and the **gifts** (1:6–7).

Lesson 2: Stand Tall, Suffer, and Keep the Faith (2 Tim. 1:8-14)

Sovereign grace.

Preexistent grace.

Visible grace.

Lesson 3: Deserted, Refreshed, and Responsible (2 Tim. 1:15-2:2)

Paul's **friends**.

Paul's **loneliness**.

Paul's **desertion**.

Paul's pain.

Onesiphorus's example.

Paul's <u>wish</u>.

First, the faith has been entrusted to **Paul** by **Christ**.

Secondly, what has been entrusted to Paul by Christ Paul in his turn has entrusted to <u>Timothy</u>. Thirdly, what Timothy has heard from Paul he is now to 'entrust to <u>faithful men'</u>, of whom there are evidently some left among the many deserters of Asia.

Fourthly, such men must be the sort of men who 'will be able to teach others also'.

Lesson 4: Endure for the Gospel: Part 1 (2 Tim. 2:3-5)

- 1. The first mark of a good soldier that Paul mentions is the willingness to suffer hardship.
- 2. Consequently, the second mark of a good soldier is that he <u>will not entangle himself in the</u> <u>affairs of everyday life.</u>
- 3. The third mark of a good soldier is **a genuine desire to please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.**
- 1. We must be truly **born again**
- 2. We must be faithful in **study** and **obedience** of God's Word, in **self-denial**, and in **prayer**
- 3. We must live according to Christ's divine standards of discipleship

Lesson 5: Endure for the Gospel: Part 2 (2 Tim. 2:6-7)

Lesson 6: The Essential Memory (2 Tim. 2:8-13)

1. REMEMBER THE GOSPEL (v. 8a)

Remember his resurrection.

Remember his messiahship.

- 2. REMEMBER THE GOSPEL'S POWER (vv. 8b-10)
- 3. REMEMBER THE TRUSTWORTHY SAYING (vv. 11–13)

First stanza (conversion)

Second stanza (perseverance)

Third stanza (apostasy)

Fourth stanza (**faithlessness**)

Lesson 7: Handling God's Word (2 Tim. 2:14-19)

- 1. ABOUT WORD FIGHTS (v. 14)
- 2. ABOUT HANDLING THE WORD (v. 15)
- 3. ABOUT GODLESS CHATTER (vv. 16–18)
- 4. ABOUT JUDGMENT (v. 19)

Sources

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