

God's Message to Us in Second Timothy

Halifax, NS

19 May 2019, 2:00 PM

Introduction

Last week in our walk through the whole Bible, we came to the pastoral epistles of Paul—the ones he wrote to ministers about their work.

- They include First and Second Timothy and Titus.
- Today we are going to look at Paul's second letter to Timothy, a young man that Paul had personally trained in the ministry who is now training others.

Last week, I told you that Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy to encourage him concerning his work at Ephesus where he had been sent to deal with some who were teaching things that were not sound.

- Paul wrote First Timothy while he was on his fourth missionary journey from AD 62-64, between his two Roman imprisonments.
- His second letter to Timothy was written during Paul's second Roman imprisonment which led to his execution, probably in AD 67 under Emperor Nero.
 - Paul anticipates in this letter that he will be executed.
 - He writes to encourage Timothy to remain fearless and firmly committed to the Lord and to his work—a message that comes with great forcefulness from a man who knows that he is about die for Christ's cause.
 - He urges Timothy not to draw back or be ashamed in any way.
 - Paul had seen a lot of compromise and he warns Timothy against it.
 - **If there was ever a message that we need to hear in our day, it is surely this!**

Let's get underway, looking at what the Holy Spirit has for us in this book.

I. Genuine faith is precious (1:3-5)

A. See how it fills Paul with joy and thanksgiving to see it in Timothy.

1. Paul speaks of how he thanks God whenever he prays for Timothy and yearns to see him again... because of the genuine faith that he had...
 - Look at verses 3-5: **"I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴ greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵ when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."**
2. Paul was constantly exposed to those who did not have genuine faith, or more literally, "un-hypocritical faith (an-oo-pok-ree-tu pis-teo)."
 - Paul names a number of persons who did not have the real deal as we will see as we move along in this letter.
 - There are so many people that have a superficial kind of faith—they profess to know the Lord, but when it gets down to it, they don't really believe...
 - They are just tagging along.

B. But what is this genuine faith?

1. This is very important—not only that you might understand Second Timothy since the whole book is about faith...
 - But even more because it is so important for you to have real faith.
2. This faith is *the testimony of the Lord* that is believed.
 - It is God’s testimony that Christians believe—His testimony about His Son.
 - It is described in verse 8-10: **Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel 11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, an a teacher of the Gentiles.**
 - Do you see?
 - God has told us (testified to us) that He has actually saved us by grace through His Son.
 - He tells us that Christ by His suffering and death has actually abolished death and brought us into eternal life.
 - If you truly believe that, it transforms your life—you can never be the same.
 - It is by believing that you are brought to Christ to share in His immortality, to live unto God forever.
 - If you don’t really believe that there is a hell from which to be saved and a God to be reconciled with, there is nothing in this testimony, this faith...
 - but if you believe, your life is thereafter about knowing God and His Son—you are brought into permanent union with Him forever.

II. This faith (this testimony of the Lord) constrains you to serve the Lord.

- When you see what God has done for you, love compels you to serve Him.
- A. It compels you to stir up your gifts in service to the Lord (1:6-7).
1. In verse 6, Paul tells Timothy to stir up the gift that he was given when he was ordained to the gospel ministry.
 - He is to keep the flame of that gift burning—to stoke the fire so that it will burn with zeal.
 - It is very inappropriate to have so great a faith, so great a testimony from God of His saving grace, and to let our gifts burn out.
 2. God gives His Spirit to every believer.
 - You have gifts—you have ways of serving God and you represent God and His testimony, God and this faith that He has given you, wherever you go.
 - Stir up those gifts!
 - How do you do that?
 - You stir them up by looking at Christ and at what God has promised you through Him—the love of Christ constrains you.

- B. This testimony of the Lord is something you should never be ashamed of (1:8-12).
1. Shame is inappropriate.
 - Paul absolutely forbids it as we saw in verse 8: **“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,”**
 2. Anyone hearing this would say, “Well of course not—how could we be ashamed of so great a testimony?”
 - And indeed, you are right, there is nothing shameful about it at all—that God has been so very gracious to us as to give us eternal life by His Son.
 - But there is pressure on you to be ashamed about that testimony.
 - Paul puts his finger right on it—it is easy to draw back when we see that believing the gospel brings suffering...
 - It can be suffering of not be accepted by others,
 - of being ridiculed for not indulging in their sin, or for believing what others consider nonsense or even offensive,
 - and it can, as with Paul, even put you at risk of imprisonment, torture, and execution!
 3. Paul says, “Be that as it may, I am glad to suffer and will not be ashamed...”
 - Look at his words in verse 12: **“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”**
 - The *thing committed* can be understood either as what God has committed to Him or what he has committed to God—
 - I think the context suggests that it should be what God has committed to us... the deposit of faith... the testimony that He has given to us about His Son and our salvation in Him.
 - As Jude calls it, **the faith that was once delivered to the saints.**
- C. This faith, this testimony of God, is a creed you must hold on to (1:13-18).
1. In verse 13, Paul calls it “the pattern of sound words.”
 - It is our Christian confession of faith—the testimony that God has given us of His Son.
 - The pattern of sound words likely refers to an actual statement of faith, something like the Apostles’ Creed which may even have been in use at this time.
 - In any case, you see what he says in verse 13:
 - **Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**
 2. It is so important to hold on to our faith.
 - You need to be catechised, or instructed, in the doctrines of our faith, and then you need to hold on to this instruction—as long as it is in agreement with God’s word.
 - Paul talks about those like Phygellus and Hermogenes who (verse 15) rejected the doctrine they had been taught.

- I see young adults sometimes who never really learned the faith get chewed up when they go off to university or to work and their faith is challenged.
 - Don't let that happen to you!
 - Take time to memorise your catechism and to understand it.
 - Read through your Bibles—are you doing regular Bible study?
- Even worse than those who never learned are those who learned the facts, but never received the love of the truth—
 - They do not hold fast to the pattern of sound words that they were taught because they don't love the testimony God has given us of His Son.

TRANS> But there is more that we are to do with this testimony, this faith that God has given to us.

III. It is a faith that we are to transmit to others.

A. In 2 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul tells Timothy to do this.

- **2 Tim 2:1-2: You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
1. So you see that Timothy is to hold on to the truth not only so that he will not turn away from the faith (as we saw in chapter 1),
 - but also that he might be able to pass it along to others, who then will be able to pass it along to others after them.
 - There is to be a succession of the very things that were taught by the apostles from one person to the next, from one generation to the next, from one place to another.
 - It is what Timothy had heard among many witnesses!
 - It is what we now have recorded in the scriptures—as Paul will tell us when get to chapter 3.
 2. But this pattern of teaching faithful men who will be able to teach others has application not only to Timothy, but to all of you.
 - Yes, Paul is talking especially here about the training of ministers, but you have a role in transmitting your faith to your children and to your neighbours.
 - Each of you will meet people that none of the rest of us will ever meet.
 - And as you are faithful to live for the Lord, you will have opportunities to talk to others and perhaps to bring them to church.
 - And you also have opportunity to encourage one another in the faith... by your example, by your encouragement, by your instruction, by your admonitions, and so on.
 3. The church is called to take the gospel to all nations and to teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded us.
 - So be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus so that you can help transmit this precious faith of ours to others.

B. This calls for extreme dedication.

1. Like a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer (2:3-7).
 - Paul uses all three to describe the strong commitment Timothy needed to have in this work because it is so important.

- He says: **You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.** ⁴ **No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.** ⁵ **And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.** ⁶ **The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops.** ⁷ **Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.**
 - Parents, you think about this—what is more important? sports? education? recreation? popularity? wealth? or your children’s faith?
 - Do you make church a priority over these things? What about family worship? What about prayer? What about ministry to others?
 - Is there a commitment appropriate to the importance of the matter?
2. Keep before you the risen Christ and His reward so that you will be willing—even eager—to put in the effort that is called for in the face of suffering.
- Look at 2:8-13:
 - Overall, Paul tells us in these verses of the great joy & reward that is coming if we have served the Lord instead of denying Him.
 - He is alive. He is risen. We will meet Him. He will reward us.
 - Because He is truly risen, Paul endures all things for the sake of the elect that they may obtain this salvation and eternal glory.
 - The suffering is entirely worthwhile!
 - By diligent labour, Paul is able to lead others to Christ.
 - If you put no effort into it, it is unlikely that you will ever see anyone come to Him.
 - If you are ashamed of the gospel, why would they be interested, at least as far as you are concerned?

TRANS> So you see that diligent labour is called for in the business of leading others to faith.

- But our service as Christians also involves addressing those who depart from the faith.

IV. We are to deal with those who depart from this faith (2:14-26).

A. Remind them of the truth and call them from their errors.

1. In 2:14, Paul says: **Remind *them* of these things.**
 - Of what things?
 - The things he was just talking about...as in verse 12—**that if we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.**
 - Remind them that they turn from Christ at their own peril.
2. Paul continues in verse 14: **charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.**
 - These folks were getting diverted from the truth—getting into what Paul calls profane and idle babblings—even saying that the resurrection was already past.
 - Those who do not love Christ and His salvation will gravitate to such silliness. It is very destructive. They don’t love the gospel.

- B. Paul warns Timothy not to get caught up in their endless debates about these things.
1. It is an easy thing to do—but in verse 16, Paul says: **“But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.”**
 2. In verse 20, he explains that in a great house there are different kinds of vessels for different purposes—
 - There is a toilet and there is a sink—one is for honour, one is for dishonour. God has a purpose for them in His church...
 - Of course he is talking about people here—and in verse 21 he says that we are to cleanse ourselves from the vessels of dishonour... **Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**
 - In other words, don’t be sucked into all their foolish and ignorant disputes.
 - It is one thing to help someone who is struggling with truth, but quite another to wrangle with someone who is rejecting the truth.
 3. Instead of striving with such people, endeavour to calmly and gently lead them to repentance.
 - That is the goal... 2:23-26 says: **But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. ²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.**
 - The goal is to rescue them.
- C. Know that there will be many of these vessels of dishonour in the church (in the house of God) in the last days.
1. See how Paul describes them in 3:1-9: **But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power.**
 - Remember that in the Bible (not in modern Christian books), the last days are the last period of human history before Jesus comes which began when He came the first time.
 - Joel prophesied that the Holy Spirit would be poured out in the last days, and Peter tells us that this was fulfilled at Pentecost.
 - And in Hebrews, it says that “God, in these last days, has spoken to us through His Son.”
 - So this whole period of history, we are told here, will be characterised by people in the church who are full of self-love and so are full of sin.
 - You see how it says that they have a form of godliness—they go through their rituals—but deny its power—you don’t see God as work in their lives.
 - Instead you see them leading those who are weak astray...
 - You see them ever learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth...

2. And again, the counsel from heaven is given at the end of verse 5 (3:5): **And from such people turn away!**
 - Don't let these people suck you in.
 - There have always been plenty of them since Jesus came, and there are still plenty of them today.
 - Turn away from them.
 - Patiently try to lead them to repentance, but don't quarrel with them.

TRANS> Paul tells Timothy, and therefore tells us, how to stay on the right track in this milieu where there are so many that are going astray.

V. You stay right in your faith by sticking to the Holy Scriptures.

A. Continue following the Scriptures.

1. Follow Paul's example the way Timothy did...
 - In 3:10-11: **But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.**
 - We have enough information about Paul in the Scriptures that we know much about these things too—we can follow his example too...
 - His doctrine is his teaching—his apostolic teaching that is recorded for us in the word—but we also have his example of suffering for Christ laid out for us.
 - You also will do well to find faithful Christians today that you can learn from.
 - This has always been an important aspect of walking with God—He wants us to live together as a body—so that we can learn from one another.
2. You see how Paul also urges Timothy to continue in the heritage he had in his mother and grandmother who taught him the Scriptures.
 - In 3:14-15, he says: **“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”**
 - A lot of you have parents who brought you up with the Scriptures...
 - They read the Bible to you and talked about it at home (if any of you are not doing that you are wronging your children),
 - And they brought you to church to hear the word preached.
 - This is your heritage and you are to continue it in it.
 - It is the way of salvation.
3. The Scriptures are the foundation of all—
 - They are God-breathed...that is literally what it says in 3:16-17...
 - **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God** (literally, God-breathed, as His very voice), **and profitable for doctrine** (teaching you what you need to believe), **for reproof** (showing you your sin and need of Christ), **for correction** (showing you the right way to go—in Christ), **for instruction in righteousness** (for training you to live in Christ and in all His commandments), **that the man of God** (the minister of the word) **may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

- Isn't this a marvellous thing?
 - God has not put us in a situation where we have to guess about what we should believe or about how we should live.
 - He has given His church everything we need to know in the Scriptures.
 - Those who preach the word don't need to make stuff up—they have a complete testimony from God by His Spirit.
 - And those who hear sermons can confirm the rightness of what they hear by comparing it with the Scriptures... the preaching they hear should open the Scriptures and press their message upon you.
 - It is so reassuring to have God's word in this form so we can know that what we believe is from God.
- B. You can see how Paul goes on in chapter 4 to admonish Timothy to preach the Scriptures.
1. He solemnly charges him to do so:
 - 2 Tim 4:1-2: **I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word!**
 - He is not to preach something else and that means that you are not to listen to something else preached.
 - God is super serious about this—the Lord Jesus Christ is the judge of the living and the dead, and He does not want something else preached to His people.
 - It is the word of God that is to be expounded.
 - If someone starts bringing you some other message that is not in agreement, don't be so foolish as to continue to listen to it.
 2. And look, you need the word to be applied to you in preaching... Paul says to Timothy as verse 2 continues...
 - **Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**
 - Look at the last part...
 - The preacher is to preach the word in a persuasive manner—convincing you of the doctrine—so that it rebukes you and shows you your sin, so that you are exhorted to go forward...
 - But what is this about doing it **in season and out of season**?
 - It means whether people are receptive or not, still the word is to be preached—never is the message to be altered to make it more attractive.
 - Once that begins, it will lead to a complete departure from the truth—as can be seen in the majority of mainline churches today.
 - The preacher who does this will have a very severe judgment to bear... but look who it is that drove him to compromise—the hearers...
 - Verses 3-4 say: **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”**

- It is your responsibility to want to hear the word, to want to be convinced and rebuked and exhorted with all longsuffering and teaching...
 - Congregations that end up with ministers that deny the gospel are not victims—they got what they wanted and they will be judged too because they did not love the truth, but yearned for fables.
3. But you see, Timothy is told to keep on preaching the gospel no matter what.
- **2 Tim 4:5: But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**
 - Timothy is to keep at it. That is where the endurance comes into play.

TRANS> We stay on track by sticking with the Bible.

- That is how you will continue in the true faith—in the testimony that God has given us of salvation through His Son.
- That is how you will stay faithful to the faith.

VI. Consider well the outcome of faithfulness to the faith as Paul presents it in the rest of chapter 4.

A. In 4:6-8, he testifies to his circumstances at the end of his life!

- **For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

1. That is downright exhilarating.

- Here is this man, pouring out his life as an offering to God in service to Him.
- He has been faithful to give the diligence that is called for, to fight the good fight of faith.
- And now he goes to meet his Lord in glorious hope, to receive a crown of righteousness which the LORD will graciously give him.
- He did not turn aside and deny Christ when the pressure came on—he has served Him to the end and now his reward is near.
- What joy!

2. Now tell me, where do you want to be at the end of your life?

- Do you want to be in the place of one who has denied Christ? one who has had little regard for Him?
- Or do you want to come to Him as one who has poured out your life for Him?
 - It's convicting, isn't it?
 - How foolish we are.

B. But know what to expect if you pour your life out for Christ.

1. It will be lonely—not many will stand with you.

- a. Some will—and what dear friends they will be to you.
 - but many will not...

b. You can see how Paul speaks of this...

- 1) In verse 9 he urges Timothy to be diligent to come to him—he wants to see this young man whose sincere faith brought so much joy to him...

- He also speaks of other friends who helped him in various ways and who are serving in various places...
 - What dear friends those are who truly stand with you when you are opposed for following Christ—who are, as Paul had been admonishing, “not ashamed of the gospel, or of me his prisoner.”
- 2) But there are also those who will not stand with you at such times.
- In verse 10, Paul speaks of Demas who forsook him... and in verse 16 are the very sad words, “**At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.**”
 - They all chickened out, the way Jesus’ disciples did when He was crucified.
 - Yes, it is lonely to pour out your life for Christ.
2. But the best thing of all is that when people do not stand with you, the Lord will!
- Like Paul in verses 17-18, your confidence needs to be in the risen Lord.
 - 4:17-18: **But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. ¹⁸ And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!**
 - The Lord is pleased when you have genuine faith—faith that serves Him no matter what.
 - He upholds you when you do that.
 - He does not keep you from hard times—even from death for Him—but through it all, He stands with you.
 - Remember what happened when Stephen was martyred?
 - He saw Jesus Christ standing—not sitting, but standing for him.
 - What a precious delightful thing!
 - There He was, standing to strengthen him...
 - Standing in support of him...
 - And standing to welcome him.
 - What an amazing welcome!

What a gracious Saviour He is—First He saves us and puts us into His service.

- Then He supports us and stands with us.
- May each of you know Him as the Lord who stands with you now and who will stand to welcome you at the end.