

The Second Epistle to Timothy

Part 1

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[00:00:01] tonight is from Paul's second letter to Timothy, the whole of chapter 1.

If my memory serves me well, or more particularly if my records are accurate, the last time I was in this area I took up some of the cardinal features of the pastoral epistles, themes which are developed in 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy and Titus. It seems reasonable that building upon that we should spend time this week, if the Lord will, on Paul's second letter [00:01:06] to Timothy. Also, since four evening sessions are available, it's not unreasonable to look at an epistle where we can give something of a survey of four chapters. Many of you are youngish Christians, but you can't make any excuses on that account. If you begin at Acts 14 with the preaching of the Gospel at Lystra and Derby, and follow through every reference sequentially to the last reference of Timothy in 2nd Timothy chapter 4, you'll [00:02:12] find that while there's steady, unspectacular, consistent progress, he hadn't really been a Christian any longer than most, if not all of us. So this record has been left in Holy Scripture as a guide as to where we should be at least as believers on our Lord Jesus Christ. Gift varies, rate of progress varies, but if any of us have been believers for several [00:03:01] years, looking around, I see no reason to doubt that. The things that are said by way of instruction and challenge to Timothy are relevant to us. And those of us who are longer in the tooth than that, it's a very good reminder of things that we should have learned and applied and should be encouraging other younger believers to follow. So there's something in for us all, brother and sister alike. Chapter 1 begins, as many epistles do, with Paul's assertion of his apostleship. God gave him a special job to do. He's called an apostle because God sent him with messages for the Lord's people, which is what an apostle [00:04:08] is, a sent one. But while we take account of that, let's just think in passing, first of all, how men generally regarded Paul, and then we'll think of what God takes account of in Paul. The local populace who knew about him would consider, first of all, that he was what they would call a political prisoner, which is unlikely to affect you and me. More particularly, those who knew anything at all about him would regard him as a religious turncoat. [00:05:09] He'd been a very influential, powerful Jew, read the history in the book of Acts, and then suddenly, instead of rooting out and securing the imprisonment, or worse, of those who named Christ as saviour, he turned completely around and he was now the foremost protagonist of the Christian Gospel at that time. And God, by the Holy Spirit, has preserved for 2,000 years almost, this record where Paul is directed by the Holy Spirit to speak of himself in this special way. [00:06:13] Underlying all this is the fact, read 2 Corinthians 11, the catalogue of things that the Apostle Paul suffered because he'd become a believer on the Lord Jesus

Christ. It's a staggering catalogue of things that he suffered. But implicit in what Paul says to Timothy about himself is this. He's going to go into the detail, but he says, Timothy, I've trodden the way before. God has preserved me through thick and thin. When many things might have [00:07:08] been well calculated to dissuade me from being a committed Christian, God has sustained me through everything. And the God who has sustained me will sustain you. He knew, what we learn from scripture, that Timothy was a relatively timid person with a tender constitution the kind that might easily be put off. We all vary, don't we? Some of us thrive on encouragement. Some of us thrive on gentle leading. Some of us have such a perverse temperament [00:08:01] that we positively thrive on opposition. Whatever our personal inclination, God brings the kind of experience into our lives that if we make good use of it, it will bring us through as God brought Paul through and as he brought Timothy through. Now, in his salutation here, he says to Timothy, my dearly beloved son. Very good. When you see a special bond between an older believer and a younger believer, most of us, if we've been around it any length of time at all, can look back and give thanks to the Lord that in our formative years there [00:09:04] was an older believer, mature, wise, with the wisdom that comes from experience, that gave us the right kind of encouragement at the right way and looking back we'll say, well, if it hadn't been for the Lord's provision in that godly man, godly woman, where would I be now? And Timothy had that sort of bond, accentuated by the fact that Paul evidently had been used to bring the young man, Timothy, to the Lord. He says we have this special spiritual bond. I was allowed of God to be your spiritual father and we've been helpful to one another ever since. And he goes into this. And in verses 3 to 6, he [00:10:07] goes over some of the happy memories that Paul had of Timothy. We all have memories and if we are discerning, we can have happy memories of the way the Lord has led us from the first day we trusted Christ as saviour until now. One of the major issues in 2nd Timothy is that the Lord is coming soon. We haven't much time left and increasingly as the Lord's coming draws near, things are going to get worse rather than better. And when times are tough and things are difficult, [00:11:04] one of the Lord's mercies to us is that he preserves in our thoughts memories of good experiences of the Lord and happy fellowship with those who are like-minded that will stand us in good stead in evil days. The Lord is merciful. He brings back to our memory, not that we are always sighing for the good old days as men speak of it, but if we are discerning, we store up treasured memories of spiritual blessing, good relationships, good fellowship with those who are like-minded and the Lord uses them to encourage us in difficult days. One of the things that Timothy [00:12:01] had to give thanks for was that he'd had the right sort of encouragement from his earliest days.

Grandmother, mother and then himself. Some of you, I know, had godly grandparents, godly parents and you've chosen to follow the good example that they set you. I used to live in Cheshire, geographically, for 20 years, just over the border from Lancashire where all the cotton mills were. And there was a well-known saying then, which is known nationally, internationally, a sad [00:13:10] tale. Clogs to clogs in three generations. You'll have heard the expression. You know what it means? Someone, clogs, were worn by the lower social and financial orders. A cotton worker, starting from nothing, labouring with clogs on his feet. Worked hard, did well, made progress, finished up very successful man. Influential, powerful, rich and he'd had, he'd built up a great business and he [00:14:01] appreciated where he'd come from, which was nothing. His son, second generation, perhaps a very small boy when his father began to build the business up. He knew the origins of his father and he appreciated it to some extent, but he hadn't gone through it himself. Hadn't quite been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but he'd enjoyed blessings that he personally hadn't worked for. But some measure of appreciation. He had a son, third generation. His father, by the time the grandson was born, his father, well-heeled, well-clothed, affluent, [00:15:02] enjoying what the grandfather had worked hard for. Sad to say, the grandson, who knew nothing about what it was to work his way up

from nothing, dissipated the result of the grandfather's hard work. And so much so, as his grandfather had started with nothing, the grandson finished with nothing, back to labouring in clogs. A sorry historical picture, isn't it? Happened many times. Paul says to Timothy, I'm glad in your case there isn't this spiritual counterpart of that, but be warned, Timothy, be warned, you and me. If some of us have had the benefit of godly grandparents and parents who to some measure [00:16:10] knew the pit from which they'd been dug, or let the grandchildren, the third generation, beware, in case we throw overboard what grandparents worked so hard to build up spiritually. It's a telling lesson, isn't it? We live in a day where spiritually clogs have gone to clogs in three generations. Now Paul says to Timothy, I'm persuaded better things of you. Godly grandmother, godly mother, they showed you the way that was right and you followed their good example. And he says, keep going in that. I move down now to verse six. Oh yes. There are some things that are beyond passing from generation to generation.

[00:17:18] Encouragement, devotion, appreciation. Yes, very good. But if God is going to give you a work to do for him, he will implant within you a gift, some capacity to work for him in the name of your saviour. See, there are some things that are not a matter of natural generation or inheritance. If God wants you to do something for him, he will give you a personal gift [00:18:05] which needs to be encouraged, yes, but it needs to be developed. And in natural things, we know all about atrophy. If you don't use it, you lose it. It's even more true in spiritual things than it is in natural, secular or business things. So, God, Paul says, God has given you something, a capacity to take in and develop and mature and you owe it to your Lord and saviour to put to good use what he has given you to enjoy for yourself. Now, he says, what resources are available? Verse six he says, by the way, he says, I'll be very quick to recognise and to identify where that gift is developing. I'll be very happy to give you opportunities. [00:19:14] I've noticed often these happy relationships between an older believer and a younger believer where you have that happy blend of mature experience and youthful vigour, how useful it is in the work of the Lord. And Paul says, I'll give you all the encouragement you need, but he says, the resources that you will need to employ come from on high, from heaven itself. God has not given us this spirit of cowardice. He knew that Timothy was a relatively timid man, but he says, he's given us power, love and sound mind or wise discretion. [00:20:03] No time now. If you want to know, well, if you want to consider a development of what's involved in this verse, power, love, wise discretion in Christian terms, as with many other things, you'll have to turn to the epistle that tells us so much about the Christian assembly. And assembly principles. If you look at 1 Corinthians chapter 12, you'll read about the gifts that God makes available. If you look at chapter 13, you'll see the love that motivates everything. And if you look at chapter 14, you'll see how the gifts with which God endows individuals and local companies and in a larger sphere, how these gifts have to be used with wise discretion. [00:21:14] Happy title or subtitle this over chapters 12, 13 and 14 of 1 Corinthians, power, love and wise discretion. Now, those resources are there. And in verse 8 he says, be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner. Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. Or Timothy Paul says, the more you are committed to serve the Lord, the purer your motives, [00:22:07] the greater your commitment to do what is right, the more you can be sure there'd be opposition. There'll be misunderstanding. People will misconstrue your motives. They'll say nasty things about you in a stage whisper, making sure that you're here, even though they're talking to somebody else. And the nearer we get to the coming of the Lord, the more this will be so. Discouragement to those who commit themselves to doing what is right in line with Holy Scripture. But he says, if this day, the present period, if this day is going to be a dark day, one of the things that will keep you going is the recognition of what's going to happen in that day. [00:23:11] It's a special term, especially in 2nd Timothy. That day, the day when God will reveal everything in its true colours. The day when God will make plain his assessment of what you're

doing. When the Lord Jesus Christ, your Lord and Saviour, will have taken account, at the judgement seat of Christ, of everything that you've done for him. And he will bring that into universal display. Or Timothy Paul says, you will get opposition, you will get discouragement. It won't always be easy, just the reverse. But when it gets difficult in this day, you bear in mind that day in view of which you're serving the Lord at the present time. [00:24:10] Now we'll just have a little touch on verse 9. Yes, verse 9 is very important.

When we first start reading Scripture, many things puzzle us. One of the things is this kind of thing. Notice, verse 9 says, God has saved us and called us with an holy calling.

Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace. Now, hidden in that verse is a marvellous truth. When we first trust the Saviour, we are saved and we know it and we are delighted, ready for heaven while living upon earth. [00:25:19] It may well be some time after that, before we begin to realise that there are greater matters involved than my being saved, wonderful though it is. And we begin to realise that certain dignities have been conferred upon us, we who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is referred to here as a calling. While I read many translations to get help in study, I'm glad that our simple English version lends itself to the kind of alliteration that makes it easy for us to remember things. [00:26:12] This calling of God, this dignity that God has conferred upon us, it's spoken of as a heavenly calling, it's called a high calling, and here it's called a holy calling. And there's much food if we like to consider them.

It's a mercy that we are allowed to enjoy the forgiveness of sins, knowing the Lord is our Saviour, finding his help as a friend and shepherd, we are allowed to enjoy that and then we begin to appreciate some of the deeper truths of Christianity. [00:27:04] That's the way we grow into it. But if you look later in the verse, there's another expression, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace. Now this is looking at things from the other end. God's purpose, if you'll excuse the exactitude of this, to me, the purpose of God in Scripture is always spoken of in the singular, never in the plural. I might in a loose way or believers might talk about the purposes of God. Scripture speaks of one. God has ever had one thing in mind, the glory of his well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and our association with him as his companion, as his bride. [00:28:13] Christ, the mystery concerning Christ and the Church. Everything else is geared to that end. This is what God has in mind. But in order that his purpose might be brought to fruition, it's needed the exercise of God's grace, free unmerited favour, if that purpose is to be brought to pass. Now in this one verse, we look at it from both ends. First of all, he says God has saved us and called us. That's our way into it. This is on the line of apprehension. We grow in that way. Happy are we when we begin to notice in Scripture, God telling us things as a matter of revelation. And purpose and grace in that order are a matter of revelation. God telling us what he's done and why that he's done it. [00:29:21] But the way we grow into it responsibly is on the line of apprehension. Just a little thing, but very well worth noticing. Verse 12, we get Paul's personal conviction. There are many verses in Scripture where we might say, oh, that's normal Christian experience. Very good. But there are many things we can't learn in a crowd. Has to be gone in for personally, individually, without leaning on any props. God provides us props when we are weak. [00:30:08] But God provides us with props or crutches so that as we develop strength, we don't need the props. And sometimes we don't like it when the props, the crutches are taken out the way. It would be a sad thing, wouldn't it, if I broke my leg and that I have to spend the rest of my life on a crutch because the leg never gained its full strength. It's even more sad spiritually if we never develop the kind of spiritual stamina and strength that means that even if the Lord chooses to remove the crutches, the props, we are still able to go on committed to the Lord to be well pleasing to him. [00:31:02] Well, Paul had this personal commitment,

verse 12, look at the detail, meditate about it, in particular this point that it's not something that he can say of Timothy. Paul can say it of himself like just one example in Philippians, for to me to live is Christ. Paul couldn't say that on behalf of the Philippians. The Philippians had to decide whether they had the commitment to say it on their own behalf. There are many things like that. We can enjoy it in company with others who have gone the same road but only if we've gone that road as an individual for ourselves. Well, he says, there will be discouragement, there will be opposition without dwelling on it. Verse 15, this thou knowest. Oh yes, in verse 12 he says, I know. [00:32:11] He's gone through it himself but he has to say, now you know certain things that if God is working in you, the devil will also try to undo that work. He says, so beware. Take account of the opposition and make sure your personal commitment to the Lord will see you through the darkest days. In between, verse 13, he says, how are you going to do it? What do we say to the little ones? Read your Bible, pray every day. We need to say that to one another every time we meet each other. The major resource in helping us to resist the evil in the dark days before the coming of the Lord is to gain, as from God, from the Scriptures, in the power of the Holy Spirit, [00:33:15] what he speaks of as an outline of sound words. In other words, personally in my bonnet, I suppose, I would say, generally speaking, if you are aware of someone that's trusted the Lord, soundly say, no doubt about that, I would say, within about two years, you will be able to discern whether there will be anything or nothing in the Lord's work. There are exceptions. But generally speaking, if we really love the Lord, if we study the Scriptures and get an understanding of the framework of the teaching, the doctrine of God, within about two years, we should be beginning to be useful servants of the Lord in one way or another. [00:34:17] We don't all serve in the same way, we don't all have public offices to fill, we don't all have the same level of prominence. But there'll be something that the Lord gives you to do that you'll do with commitment. And of course, while I say this about you, you can say it about me. If I've really handed myself over lock, stock and barrel to the Lord within a couple of years, provided I'm given the right sort of encouragement from older believers, they've helped me to understand how I can take in edifying ministry and apply it in my own life, I'd say again, within a couple of years. [00:35:02] It will become obvious whether I'm going to be anything or nothing in the service of God. Well, Timothy, if you read that chronological sequence, you'll find that he certainly developed that way. The last few verses, just a few moments. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus.

Paul's talking to Timothy, but he doesn't hesitate to bring in a mention of other people that Paul has had his eye on and who've been a help to Paul, and Paul gives open thanks. Not ashamed to give credit where it's due. Now, this is not a prayer for the dead when he says, the Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

[00:36:15] This is not a prayer, it's a statement of fact. He says, Onesiphorus, good friend of mine, provided hospitality whenever I was in the area, wasn't ashamed that he was housing, being hospitable to someone who was a public disgrace and even a jailbird. How would you feel if you volunteered to be hospitable, provide hospitality for the preacher that's coming next week and he was a well-known jailbird? How comfortable would you feel with the neighbours, having that sort of person in your house, on your visiting list? Onesiphorus didn't mind. Where he was put was for the work of the Lord. I'm delighted to give him the right hand of fellowship and provide hospitality. [00:37:19] And Paul says, well, whether it was in his home, whether it was in Rome, wherever it was, he sought me out. And he says, a statement of fact. In that day, the day when everything will be declared for exactly what it is, the Lord will reward him in that day. That's all there's time for tonight. Trust the outline will be a help. For those who are younger, a guide as to the way we are to go. For those of us who are older, a reminder of things that we should have had by personal experience and should now be passing them on to others. For the moment, let us sing our closing hymn, number 52.