

The Second Epistle to Timothy

Part 2

Speaker	Ernest Brown
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[00:00:00] On the first of four sessions we hope to spend together, and in part because there are four sessions available, we are hoping to look at the four chapters of Paul's second letter to Timothy. And last night we looked at chapter one. There isn't time to recapitulate, but I understand a recording of last night's meeting is available for those who wish to hear what was said. I think it's right that even though it's a fairly lengthy chapter, I think it's right to read the Word of God. So let us read 2 Timothy chapter 2. Last night then we looked at chapter one. The last known epistle written by the Apostle Paul. Written [00:01:06] to a younger believer to pass on godly counsel, to provide edifying instruction, and to issue various challenges. Looking around, I would say almost all of us, potentially at least, should be in the position of being classified as Timothys, Christian Timothys. And we look further tonight into what that involves. Some of us are at the stage where we should have been living with Timothian features, exemplifying them for many years. We do well to take stock as to whether we've forgotten things that we should have been practising for many years.

[00:02:09] The epistle was written about two-thirds of the way through the first century AD, about thirty years after the Lord died and rose again. There'd been time for Christianity to become established, and the various features that mark any group of people who do things together had begun to emerge. It was with great foresight that the epistle was written because so early, perhaps a generation after the Lord died and rose again, pointing out features that would be particularly true immediately before the coming again of our [00:03:05] Lord Jesus Christ. If that was true then, nineteen and a third centuries ago, it's even more true now, that we can expect the scriptures, as in every place, to be entirely topical to our own situation. Because Christianity had been around several years now, he begins by speaking of what we might term four spiritual generations. He speaks of himself, me. He speaks of Timothy, thou. He speaks of faithful men and he speaks of others also. When he [00:04:02] speaks of himself, he's speaking of what is common to the apostolic band, the generation of those first-generation believers who were commissioned by the Lord, sent out by the Lord to act on his behalf. Following closely behind them, there were what we might term the Apostles' Delegates, not commissioned immediately by the Lord himself, but those who received their commission from the Apostles themselves, who had first-hand intimate knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And it's fair to speak of these, this second generation, in a special way, as Apostles' Delegates. Timothy was one, Titus was another, and so on. Thankfully, [00:05:08] that generation of Apostles' Delegates did their job so well, that they were enabled to pass on to a third generation, who proved themselves to be faithful

men. And then it is considered, I don't like the word inevitable, but it is certainly considered right to point out that the conditions immediately before the Lord comes, the Apostles have gone, the Apostles' Delegates have gone, and faithful men, generally speaking, were in the past. And if it was true in the days of Timothy to speak of a generation, it's certainly true now, we must be in the days of the others also. So he speaks of these four spiritual [00:06:05] generations. There is every instruction available that whatever our gender, male or female, whatever our age, whatever our present stage of development, there is enough resource in Scripture, there is sufficient power in the Holy Spirit to make good the truth of God in our souls, to enable us to meet every commitment, every challenge that Paul issued to Timothy. Of course, there is instruction as to how these four generations might move on. The Apostles were beginning to go off the scene. No doubt Paul was one of the last of them. [00:07:03] And then after him, perhaps another 30 years afterwards, John went to be with the Lord, the Apostle John. But before he goes off the scene, he leaves these instructions as to the need to go on, the need to continue in the things that they knew to be true and how in fact they were to equip themselves to respond to the exhortation. Now we move on from that to verses three to six with the well-known similes. Paul says to Timothy, being a Christian is like being a soldier. Being a Christian is like being an athlete. Being a Christian [00:08:02] is like being a farmer. He takes these up one at a time. And he says, as to being a soldier, he says, you will need to endure hardness or hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Now I understand that the word there, when it says endure, it means taking your share. When it gets tough and rough, as it does, are you willing to take your share in taking the strain, sharing the burden? Oh yes. On behalf of the Lord, you're his representative. But when the trouble comes along, are you willing to stand your ground as a good soldier or do you want to disappear into the crowd and be right on the verge of things? I'm interested in speaking of this, [00:09:09] that in verse four he says, no man that woe. First Corinthians chapter nine, the last few verses about 24 to 28. Paul says, you know, being a Christian, it's not like shadow boxing. It's the real thing. It's the bout itself. And when he takes up this similar thought here, he says, this is no training camp. It's the real thing. You're in a war. And he says, the overriding impulse of a good soldier, whose where he is for the right reason, is to please the one who [00:10:08] commissioned him to enter the war, enter the battle on his behalf. I was slightly embarrassed. I've been asked the question before, but some time ago, a very old Christian gentleman, had been taking some meetings, something like this, and afterwards he said, are you full time? How do I answer without being facetious? I said what I hope any of us would say. I hope before the Lord, I've been full time since I trusted the Lord as my saviour. Being a soldier of Jesus Christ is not [00:11:06] a part-time occupation. It affects every department of our life. I've been interested and a little saddened lately to learn some very good friends of mine who affirm most strongly that what they believe should affect every department of their life. And when they go into detail, they are absolutely certain that what the Word of God says should affect their personal life. It should affect their family life. It should affect their professional life. But sadly, they stop there. I [00:12:04] would have thought that as well as our personal lives and family lives and business lives, it seems obvious that most of all it should affect our ecclesiastical lives, the way we behave as individual Christians and as we act collectively also. Oh yes, we're in a war. We need to apply the Word of God to every part of our lives and full time, all the time, whatever we are doing. Well, he makes this point as he moves on. And again, he takes up the matter of the athlete who must compete according to the rules. Otherwise, he will be disqualified. Perhaps the hardest simile introduced [00:13:06] might be when he says a Christian should be like a farmer. Now, I can only understand this in the light of Genesis 8.22. I think it might be worth turning to it. We have to keep moving. Genesis 8.22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease. Now, that was the promise given to Noah. But every farmer, whether he's a Christian or not, acts upon the promises of God. A

very earnest Christian farmer of my acquaintance said [00:14:05] to me once, I'm not too concerned what weather comes as long as it is seasonal. He meant, of course, that as the scripture says, the farmer relies upon a succession of cyclical weather. You have daylight, you have darkness, you have heat and cold, you have summer and winter. And when the farmer ploughs a furrow and sows the seed, he knows that all the seasons are necessary. If the product is to be right in quality and quantity. Now, above all, a Christian must act upon the promises of God without fear or favour. And in this way, [00:15:04] it's proper that these three similes apply to the Christian. Verse 7. Consider what I say and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Now, in common with other statements like this in the pastoral epistles, 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus, this is not a prayer. It's a statement of fact. We have the writings of all the apostles, not just Paul. If we consider in the Lord's presence, the Word of God in dependence upon the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit, we have this [00:16:03] promise. The Lord will give thee understanding in all things. Notice here, it's the Lord in submission to him, recognising that he knows and his way is best, we find out that the Lord does indeed give us understanding in all things. And he adds to that, in verse 8, he says, the foundation of triumphant Christianity is the personal, bodily, actual resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Time and again, he emphasises this. Oh yes, Christ who died, rose again, he's ascended where he was before, he's exalted a prince and a saviour, and those who depend upon all the resources that he provides from his present exaltation have the promise of God [00:17:18] that he will see through the servant of the Lord. Won't be easy, as we have in chapter 1, he says, wherein I suffer, don't expect an easy time, indeed, the more you commit yourself to being true to the Lord, personally, family-wise, business-wise, assembly-wise, don't imagine for a moment that if you're true to the Lord and the Lord's name in every department of your life, don't assume for a moment you'll be universally popular, just the reverse. Satan will ensure that even if you do the right thing for the right reason, with the right motive in your heart, Satan will ensure that every kind of opposition will try to put you off. [00:18:24] The Lord himself will ensure that you're tested in every way that's necessary to demonstrate that not only your actions, but that your motives are pure. And he says, now, this day is the day of suffering, the day of rewards for the Christian lies ahead, oh yes, you'll have joy in your soul now, but as to manifest reward, that will await the day of display at the appearing in glory of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And he goes on to say this, being linked with the Lord at a time when the Lord's rejected will not make for easy living at the present time, [00:19:17] but there is the satisfaction that the Lord, who himself has gone through to victorious session at the right hand of God, your links with him will demonstrate, will manifest the rewards that he assesses you are worthy of. Verse 14 onwards, he says, now, speak to those that you're in touch with, remind them of these things, charge them, this again, this typical word of the pastoral epistles, bring this charge, not an accusation so much, but ensure that they are aware of their responsibility to respond to these things. [00:20:08] I try not to quote other people, in case people think I'm trying to hide behind it. A brother who was always helpful to me, made this remark, you may have heard me quote it before.

I think I must have apologized for saying something that we all knew. And this is what he said, don't be afraid of repetition, but beware of recitation. There's a difference, isn't there? It's obvious.

The truth of God was being repeated in the first century AD by Paul, then by the apostles delegates, and then the faithful men, even if we are down to the others also now, it's incumbent upon us to tell it again, repeat to one another as often as is necessary, the things that we all know to be true. [00:21:22] If we don't, surprisingly quickly, they'll go out of mind, and we will no longer think that they are important. We need to keep reminding ourselves and each other of the things that we know to be true, and that we might all be compelled to see the necessity of seeing them through. How do we get there? Verse 15. When I was in my mid to late teens, I was in a Bible class. Happy to be there

because the Bible class teacher was my father in the faith. He brought me to the Lord. I learned a lot from him, in demeanour as much as detailed instruction. [00:22:12] A very unworldly man, not interested in the things of this world at all, or the times and the seasons. I was amazed when the last Sunday before Christmas, he came into the Bible class, and he said, I've got a Christmas box for you. I didn't even know that he knew of such an expression. We all waited agog. He said, this is a Christmas box for every one of you. Second Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. [00:23:03] I wasn't very conversant with the time. Of course, I memorised it then because he'd given it to me, as well as to the others. And of course, what you memorise when you're young, you don't forget when you're old. I'm always encouraged when I meet mature, aged believers who can't remember what deities are where they live, but they're still word perfect on verses of scripture that they learned early in life. Let us not only read the scripture, let us memorise it, not just to quote verbatim as ammunition, but in order that it might govern every department of our life. Well, that was a verse that I learned early. And of course, if these to whom Timothy had to address himself were going to be any use as Christian soldiers, athletes or farmers, it would only be as they were fortified and armed by the word of God in their soul. [00:24:14] So Paul was right to say to this. He says there will be opposition. Perhaps I leave the reference to Hymenaeus and Philetus till we look at chapter three. But notice that where God is working, the devil also works. In each of these chapters, without trespassing too much, where there's a poison referred to, in the immediate context, there is an antidote. In this particular case, verse 17, their word will eat as doth a canker. We know how cancer eats away the body. Verse 19, the antidote, nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure. And again, the preservative in advance, chapter 2, 15, study to show thyself approved unto God.

[00:25:20] First of all, giving God his portion and then being fully equipped as we learn in chapter three. Now, the twin truths, balancing truths in verse 19 provide us with this foundation. First of all, the Lord knoweth them that are his, the sovereignty of God. Balancing that, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity, the responsibility of man.

[00:26:01] How often the balance between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are spoken of in the same breath. There's no conflict, there's no contradiction. They are balancing truths, they are both true. When that rather strange organisation, chapter 2, was first brought into being, I thought what a strange name to take to itself. On enquiry, I found it was an abbreviation for 2nd Timothy, chapter 2.

Very good. But those of you who shelter under the umbrella of chapter 2, you realise, don't you, that you are committing yourself to abide in every department of your life the precepts that are taught in 2nd Timothy, chapter 2. [00:27:06] But of course, that doesn't let the rest of us off the hook. If we name the name of Christ, if we affirm faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, 2nd Timothy, chapter 2 and every other chapter of the Bible is therefore our instruction and ultimate obedience. The difficulty, I am aware, is in verse 21. First of all, verse 20. In a great house, let us be simple concerning evil, wise concerning that which is good.

Nevertheless, I am not happy when believers say, 1st Timothy, the house of God in order, 2nd Timothy, the house of God in disorder. Can't be so.

[00:28:18] I know the house of God is a responsible concept. Nevertheless, we do not get the house of God in disorder in 2nd Timothy. We get man's house. We get the disorder of man's house, which, like the mustard seed in Matthew 13, has become so large, it can absorb and contain every kind of evil.

So, it's the great house in 2nd Timothy and there is much, sadly, disorder in that. The safe guard, in verse 21, if a man therefore purge himself from these, the perennial debate is, is it these persons or [00:29:18] these things? Certainly, as individuals, and we get into the individual realm in 2nd Timothy, there will be many things that a consistent believer who not only studies 2nd Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15, but applies it to his life, there will be many things he'll say, well, I can't have anything to do with that at all. The hardship comes when, with whatever patience and prayer and consultation, that you find yourself in company, at times, with persons who will not abandon the things that scripture says are evil. That's when it's hard.

[00:30:15] I, then, in such a situation, have to ask myself this, deep down, am I associated with a Christian fellowship, a spiritual fellowship, or merely a social fellowship?

Or, there are, I've met thousands of believers all over the world and it's lovely to be with all believers, but if I'm going to practice what the Bible teaches, I can only do that wholeheartedly of those who put into practice the precepts that scripture presents. [00:31:09] Oh, but I might say, when you challenge me, they're nice people, you know. I like to go on holiday with them. My children play with their children, they get on fine.

Is it really that important? Oh, I've noticed a very sad trend. Many of my generation, good personal friends of mine, for many years, have preached the truth of God as absolutely essential.

As long as it wasn't disputed. But now that some of the cardinal features of Christianity are being disputed, the temptation is to say, oh, well, really, I didn't know this was going to cause trouble. Perhaps I'd better keep quiet about it. [00:32:22] Is it, in fact, as important as I thought? I don't want to rock the boat. Now, in 2 Timothy chapter 2 terms, the twin benchmarks are these. The sovereignty of God has ensured the blessing. How willing am I, as an individual, and those believers that I am declared to be in fellowship with, consistent with the truth that scripture presents? It has led to much anguish and will continue to do so until the Lord shall come. [00:33:06] But there is this. Is the overriding consideration social, natural or spiritual? Paul said to Timothy, charge the believers you work amongst, present the importance of these things to them and encourage them in every way you can. He said, mind, don't imagine for a moment that because you're teaching them that you're clear yourself. And so he brings some personal exhortations to bear upon Timothy himself. Verse 22, he says, flee. And in verse 22, he also says, follow. In another scripture, he adds, fight, flee, follow, fight. Here, it's flee and follow. In other words, there are things to avoid.

[00:34:10] Some of you perhaps know from experience. To be in good physical health, you do well to eat certain things, take appropriate exercise and avoid other things which, for you, are detrimental to your health. Once you know that, you are well to abide by those guidelines.

I wonder if any of us are tempted to think, if it's going to be as hard as this, why bother? But for one reason or another, for most of us, it's too late to opt out. We've been reading the scriptures, we've been hearing ministry, so that we know deep down things that are right and true. [00:35:14] You cannot unlearn what you've already learned. You may feel uncomfortable when the time comes to apply them, but you cannot unlearn them. That's the trouble. Or you might say, I wish I hadn't gone in for it at the start then. If I hadn't read the scriptures and come to the meetings and heard ministry, I'd be a little innocent and I could do as I like and no one would turn a hair. That's not the way to spiritual joy. Search the scriptures, gain an understanding on the principles of 2 Timothy 2 and seek the grace and the courage to put them into practice. It's the only way or one of the ways of being a good soldier,

pleasing the one who has commissioned you for the battle and the war. There will be errors to avoid, flee from them and there will be good examples to follow. [00:36:13] As any sensible person does with their medical, physical health, so do with your spiritual health. There were things that you will realise eventually aren't good for you spiritually. Avoid them like the plague. There are things that will take time that are good for you. Go in for them. Commit yourself to them as Paul said to Timothy. Verse 24, The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach patience and going on in meekness. One of the sad facts of Christianity is, if you do the right thing for the right motive, [00:37:10] bound to be somebody that tries to avoid the issue by saying, I don't like the way you did that. Or couldn't you have tried another way? The devil will ensure that this thought comes to mind if you don't really want to face up to the principle. Even if you don't like the way he's done it, consider the principle. And how would you have done it if you think it could be done better? Paul said to Timothy, do what you have to do in the best way and the very fact that you're younger means that other people will be looking for an opportunity to criticise. Do the right thing at the right time for the right motive and, he said, as far as lies within you. Do it in a way that commends itself to your fellow believers. But most of all, he says in verses 24 and 25, do something. Remember Meroz? Curse ye Meroz. Why were they cursed? They came not to the help of the Lord. [00:38:29] Judges 5.23, somewhere around there. We might be tempted to think, well it's better, it's easier, if we do nothing at all. Unless the Lord has given you something to do, you cannot turn your back upon that. But the way the chapter ends is very good, it's balanced like the rest of the teaching. He says, do the Lord's work and certainly don't do the devil's work. You know, most of the time the devil can sit back, not lift a finger as we would speak of it, because we believers are doing to each other what, if we were all pure, [00:39:16] the devil would have to do for himself. Let us make sure that we are active in positive, constructive service in the work of the Lord and let the devil do his own work, if it must be done at all. So ends chapter 2 and there is much more of the same and a development in chapter 3, if the Lord will.