The Message of 2 Timothy

Chapter 1

The Background to Paul's situation

These are the last words of a man who was perhaps the world's greatest Christian leader. They were written in Rome from within prison – probably the Maritime Prison – about 67-68 A.D. Paul had been in prison many times before. His first imprisonment was ~60-62 A.D. when he was confined in a rented house and was allowed visitors. Now he was in prison waiting to be executed. Prisons were horrible in those days. There was no running water and almost no light. Paul had suffered much in his life and he was suffering now surrounded by the groans and cries of the dying and the complaints of the living.

Paul had no one to care for him, no pension scheme and no international prayer network to advocate for his release. All he longs for is a robe to cover his creaking old bones as winter is coming.

Paul begins his letter to Timothy with the words, ***"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus."*** He was very conscious of the divine purpose for his life. This purpose sprung from an amazing event on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-22) when a light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground and heard the voice of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus had chosen Paul to be His instrument to carry His name to the Gentiles and their kings. He told him how much he would suffer for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

So Paul was sent to proclaim the Gospel of life. This is the greatest calling anyone can be given.

What do we know about Timothy?

Timothy was the son of a mixed marriage. His mother was a Jewess and taught him the Old Testament Scriptures. His father was a Greek (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5). His home town was Lystra a rather obscure town in Galatia (Acts 16:1). The Roman Emperor Augustus made it a Roman town with a military garrison and so it was a Latin-speaking town.

Paul and Barnabas had a great time in Iconium and many believed in the Lord Jesus. In the name of the Lord Jesus, Paul healed the feet of a crippled man. The local people thought Paul and Barnabas were Greek gods in the flesh! This greatly upset them! They preached to them. (Acts 14:15-17) Then some Jews came from Antioch. Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city and left for dead. He didn't die and they left for a nearby city – Derbe. Then Paul and Barnabas returned quietly to Lystra to encourage ***"a large number of disciples***". (Acts 14:22-23) Possibly Timothy was one of these. Paul warned them that they would go through many hardships. They appointed elders and with prayer and fasting committed them all to the Lord and left.

Paul could see the potential in young Timothy. In Acts 16 Paul and Silas passed through Lystra (the second missionary journey) and Timothy joined the team with Paul as leader. As they sailed from what is now Turkey to Greece Timothy was with them having been commissioned by the elders of the church in Lystra. (1 Tim. 4:4)

Timothy was first entrusted with a special commission to Thessalonica to encourage new believers who were being persecuted. He was with Paul while Paul was preaching in Corinth. (2 Cor. 1:19) He was also with Paul in Ephesus. (1 Cor. 4:17)

Timothy was evidently a young man with a timid nature, for Paul urges the believers in Corinth to set Timothy at his ease and not to despise him. (1 Cor. 16:10-11) It seems that Timothy's mission wasn't successful. (see 2 Corinthians) Paul was in Corinth with Timothy when he wrote the letter to the Romans. (Rom. 16:21) Timothy was with Paul on his journey to Jerusalem with the money for the starving Jewish believers. (Acts 20:4-5) Paul then had a long period as a prisoner of the Romans. This was when he wrote Philemon and Philippians. When Paul was released it seems that he had left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) to counter the false teachers, supervise public worship and appoint leaders in the churches.

Paul urges Timothy to come to him while he is in prison in Rome – see Hebrews 13:23. Timothy was a loving, caring person, (2 Tim. 1:4) but he was inclined to be fearful. (2 Tim. 1:8) Paul strongly commends him for his loyalty. (1 Cor. 16:10; Phil. 2:19ff; 2 Tim 3:10)

This is probably the last letter Paul wrote. He had been on trial for his life knowing the verdict would result in his execution. So 2 Timothy is his final charge to Timothy, Paul's future hope and his final greetings and benediction. (2 Tim. 4:9-22)

The context of 2 Timothy is that there is soon to come to the church a period of intense persecution. This occurred under Emperor Nero. Christians were accused of treason because they taught about "a new kingdom". Nero needed scapegoats to divert the charge that he himself was responsible for the Great Fire of Rome. Christians were rounded up and executed. Some were dressed in the skins of wild animals and then attacked and ripped apart by fierce hunting dogs. Many others were burned to death as human torches in Nero's extensive gardens. So Paul was writing in the foreknowledge that he was coming to the end of his earthly life and was soon to die.

Timothy was responsible for the house churches in Ephesus. Paul felt concerned that he should be ready for the intense persecution that was coming soon. Paul had two great concerns:

- **A concern for the purity of the Gospel** – that it would be preserved untarnished and handed down to future generations.
- **A concern for Timothy himself**. He warns Timothy, ***"flee the evil desires of youth"***. (2 Tim: 2:22)
  In his first letter to Timothy Paul wrote, ***"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young"*** . (1 Tim. 4:12) We don't know how old Timothy was when Paul asked him to come to Rome. In Greek and Roman culture "youth" is used for adults to about the age of 40 years old.

  Timothy was prone to illness. In 1 Tim. 5:23 Paul says, ***"Stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses".***

  Timothy's temperament was timid/shy. We would probably call him an introvert. Paul encourages him to take his share of suffering without fear since God never gives us a spirit of cowardice. (2 Tim. 1:7-8; 2:1-3; 3:12; 4:5) Paul knew Timothy's weaknesses. His temperament predisposed him to lean rather than lead.

  So Timothy was a comparatively young man, frail in body and shy, but God had called him to be a church leader. "Greatness" was given to him and, like Moses, Jeremiah and a whole host of others, Timothy was very reluctant to accept it. 2 Timothy is a great encouragement to 'Timothys'.

Paul's main concern in writing to Timothy was with the Gospel – this very great truth God had revealed to him and committed to him to preach and teach. Paul knew he was going to be executed soon and God's call to him was nearing an end. For 30 years he had been faithful in preaching the Gospel in the North Eastern Mediterranean. Nero was doing his best to destroy the Christian church. Sadly, in the Asian Mediterranean there had been a rejection of Paul's teaching. (2 Tim. 1:16) Was it possible Christianity was on the verge of annihilation? If Paul was to die, who would sustain the great missionary vision of spreading the Gospel? But Paul had seen in Timothy someone who would do this. He says, ***"Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care"***. (1 Tim. 6:20)

So as the situation got worse, Timothy was to preach the Gospel, to teach it and to defend it from all attacks and against all other false Gospels and to make sure that an accurate Gospel was transmitted to others in the next generation.

We will use the following outline:

1. The Charge to **Guard** the Gospel – chapter 1
2. The Charge to **Suffer for** the Gospel – chapter 2
3. The Charge to **Continue in** the Gospel – chapter 3
4. The Charge to **Proclaim** the Gospel – chapter 4

1. Chapter One: The Charge to Guard the Gospel

The major theme of this chapter is that Timothy should never be ashamed of the Gospel. He should never hesitate to speak about it to others; he should guard it safely (v. 8-14). Paul begins in the usual way, introducing himself as the writer and indicating to whom the letter is written – to Timothy who Paul calls ***"my dear son"***.

Paul introduces himself as ***"an apostle of Jesus Christ"***. So he is claiming for himself a title that ranks him with the 12 apostles who were chosen by the Lord Jesus. (Luke 6:13) The Lord Jesus was going to send them out on a mission to represent Him and to teach and to act in His name. These 12 disciples had the amazing opportunity to hear Jesus' words and see His work, so they were in a position to bear witness to everything they had seen and heard (John 15:57). Jesus also promised them that the Holy Spirit would remind them of what He had taught them and would lead them into all the truth that He had not been able to teach them. (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13)

Paul claims he was added to this very select group when he saw the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. This gave him the qualification every apostle needed – to be a witness to the Resurrection. (Acts 1:21-16 and 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9) On the Damascus Road Paul was commissioned as an apostle. (Acts 26:16-18) Paul never forgot this commissioning. (Gal. 1:1, 11-12)

Even now, in his miserably cold cell awaiting his execution, Paul is aware he is a privileged apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He reminds Timothy (and us) of both the origin of this commission and its objective.

The **origin** was "the will of God" or "the command of God". Paul had this sustained conviction right through to the end of his life. He wasn't self-appointed by a group of other Christian leaders, but appointed by the call of Almighty God through the Lord Jesus.

The **objective** of Paul's apostleship concerns, ***"the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus"***. Paul knew his commission was to formulate the Gospel in ways that would be understood by non-Jews and then to communicate the Gospel to them. For us sinners, the Gospel is the very 'good news' of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Paul knows he will soon die, but he believes the Gospel is the promise of life. (2 Tim. 1:1) This is true for all time – true life now while we are alive and eternal life in God's presence forever! In 2 Tim. 1:10 Paul says the Lord Jesus has, ***"destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."***

But the Gospel does more than that! 1 Jn. 5:12 says, ***"He who has the Son has life!"*** Eternal life is a gift God gives and He never lies. It is made known by the preaching of the Gospel. So this is how Paul introduces himself – called to proclaim this very good news – ***"the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus".*** (2 Tim. 1:1)

Timothy as Paul's "dear son" (2 Tim. 1:2-8)

Paul calls Timothy, ***"my dear son"*** and in 1 Cor. 4:17 Paul calls him, ***"My son, whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord"***. Why did Paul call him "my son"? Perhaps because Paul was the human instrument God used to bring Timothy to the Lord Jesus in Lystra. (Acts 14:6-7)

The friendship of Paul with Timothy was expressed in 5 ways:

- **He thanked God for him** (v. 1-3). He thanked God for his conversion, his growth in grace, his assistance to Paul, his encouragement and his prayers. Do we cause others to thank God for us?
- **He prayed for Timothy**. As you read the New Testament you realise what a great pray-er Paul was. Here he tells us he was praying for Timothy, ***"without ceasing … night and day"***. How did he pray? ***"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus."***
- **He longed to see Timothy.** (2 Tim. 1:4) There is something sad about this, but we can easily identify with Paul's feelings for his 'son in the faith'.
- **He remembered his tears.** (2 Tim. 1:4) This was probably at the time Paul said goodbye to Timothy. Timothy wept and Paul also wept.
- **He rejoiced over him.** (2 Tim. 1:4) Whenever Paul thought of Timothy he was filled with joy.

Paul greets Timothy, ***"Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord"***. This was a common greeting of Christian believers in the first century A.D. As believers, we all need grace – God's kindness to us the undeserving. We also need mercy. In 1 Tim. 1:13 and 16 Paul speaks of the mercy he received. Paul adds the greeting of peace. He was going to ask Timothy to travel from Greece to Rome. We know from Paul's experience of being shipwrecked off the coast of Malta that this was a potentially dangerous journey. He would need God's grace and peace.

In verse 3 Paul says, ***"I remember you constantly in my prayers"***. In verse 4 he says, ***"I remember your tears"*** and in verse 5, ***"I am reminded of your sincere faith"***. Paul clearly recognised that it was God who had made Timothy what he was – a Christian leader.

What were the factors that influenced the making of Timothy? Paul mentions four:

- **His parents** (v. 5)

  "I have been reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice." To some extent we are all products of our inheritance. Our early days at home have a great influence on us, but we don't inherit our parents' faith, although we can be led to faith as a child by their example, their prayers and their teaching.

  So Timothy had a godly home life as he grew up. His father was Greek and his mother a Jewess who had become a believer in the Lord Jesus. His grandmother had also become a believer. So these godly women had been instructed in the Old Testament. John Calvin comments concerning Timothy, *"That he was reared in his infancy is set in such a way that he could suck in godliness along with his mother's milk."* So the first spiritual development of Timothy was through his parental upbringing.

- **His spiritual development as a result of Paul's friendship**

  In a sense, Paul was Timothy's spiritual father. Paul had led him to faith in the Lord Jesus and Timothy was not forgotten. Paul says he remembers him constantly. (2 Tim. 2:3) Paul had taken Timothy on some of his journeys and trained him as an apprentice. Now Paul longs to see Timothy again before he is executed. In the meantime Paul was praying for him all the time. This must have had a great effect on Timothy – strengthening him and giving him 'stickability' in what God had chosen for him to do.

- **The gifts God had given Timothy**

  " … I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God didn't give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."
  (2 Tim. 1:6-7)

  We aren't told which spiritual gifts Timothy received. In 1 Tim. 4:14 we read, ***"Don't neglect your gift which was given to you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you"***. We don't know what that gift was, but from the context, it was related to the ministry God had given him. ***"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it – some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers".*** (Eph. 4:7-11)

  Clearly Timothy's gifts were given by God to equip him for the ministry God had called him to. They gave him spiritual authority and power for the ministry.

  So what we accomplish, we usually owe to our parents, our friends, our pastors and many others, but above all to God who wonderfully gives us all the appropriate resources we need.

- **Paul's wise counsel to Timothy**

  A number of exhortations Paul gave to Timothy are scattered throughout 2 Timothy. All are addressed to Timothy, but all apply to us.

  ✓ ***"Stir up"*** (2 Tim. 1:6-7)

  The gift that Timothy was to stir up was evidently the gift of the Holy Spirit. The words "stir up" evoke the rekindling of a dying fire. It is as if Paul said to Timothy, 'Let the Holy Spirit blaze up and set your whole being on fire'.

Ephesians 5:18 says, ***" … be filled with the Spirit"***. We need this encouragement! 2 Tim. 1:7 says, ***"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but the spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."*** Then we will experience freedom in our hearts and minds, enduement of power, enrichment and enlightenment.

- ✓ ***"Hold fast"*** (2 Tim. 1:13)

  1 Tim. 6:3 helps to explain this. The truth is that Timothy lived in a day of increasing apostasy as we do. (1 Tim. 1:3-10; 4:6, 16, 20) Timothy was told to hold fast to the truth in faith (God-ward) and in love (people-ward). Paul said, ***"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will, in all things, grow up into Him who is the head, that is Christ".*** (Eph. 4:15)

In 2 Tim. 2 there are 3 more exhortations we will look at and in 2 Tim. 3: endure – study – flee – continue. In 2 Timothy 4:5 there is another area of warning – watch.

- **Timothy's personal discipline**

  Paul had told Timothy, ***"Don't neglect your gift which was given to you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."*** (1 Tim. 4:14-15)

  J.B. Phillips paraphrased this "stir up the inner fire" – keep it alive and blazing. How can we do this? By exercising the gift faithfully and by prayer that God would constantly renew and refresh the gift. Why is this necessary? Several factors had made Timothy what he was – his upbringing, Paul's friendship and training and God's spiritual gifts to him. Now he needed his own self-discipline to help stir up and keep stirring up God's gifts.

  In our lives, as in Paul and Timothy's lives, there is God's Sovereign Will and our human responsibility. There are the truths of God's teaching and His leading us in the past and the experiences we have had. These will all be integrated, but usually we only see this with hindsight. God's grace and God's will had made Timothy what he was. This was also true in Paul's life. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15:10, ***"But by the grace of God I am what I am and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I work harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that is within me"***.

  Timothy was the same. His mother and grandmother could teach him the Scriptures. Paul could bring him to the Lord Jesus, befriend him, pray for him, train him and encourage him, but Timothy himself had to stir up God's gift within him. His self-discipline had to be added to all God's other gifts to him.

  We are no different. We may have been given several gifts or a few spiritual gifts by God, but we must keep applying ourselves in self-discipline, keep fanning into flame that inner fire that the Holy Spirit gives us. Only in this way can we be the men and women God wants us to be. So Timothy must not be ashamed of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, but rather take his share of suffering for it, for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus crucified was folly to some and a stumbling block to others (1 Cor. 1:23). It will always cause opposition. This opposition is not only against the message, but also against the messengers!

Three main reasons we are tempted to be ashamed to share the Gospel

- ➢ **The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is often used as a swear word in our culture**

So openly being a Christian believer brings us the contempt of our colleagues and co-workers. The 'attack' becomes greater when we witness to what the Lord Jesus has done in our lives and invite people to repent of their sins and put their trust in the Lord Jesus for their salvation. The temptation is strong. If Timothy hadn't felt it, Paul wouldn't have spoken to him in these terms. Writing to the Romans, Paul says with great passion, ***"I am not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith."***

Yet we are often ashamed! The Lord Jesus warns us, ***"If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels".*** (Mark 8:38). We are more sensitive to public opinion than we like to admit. We often bow to pressure like reeds in a storm. Sometimes other Christian believers seem to us to bring

the Gospel of the Lord Jesus into disrepute by the way they evangelise, the way they behave and by what they say.

- **The Gospel of which we must not be ashamed**

Paul outlines the main features of the Gospel in 2 Tim. 1:9-10 and then summarises our responsibility in relation to it in 2 Tim. 1:11-18. It is our duty as believers to spread the Gospel of the Lord Jesus – God's "very good news" for mankind. Paul writes to Timothy, ***"Yet I am not ashamed, because I know who I have believed and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day"***.

Speaking to Timothy (and to us) he says, ***"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 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. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but now has been revealed through the appearing of Our Saviour Christ Jesus who has destroyed death and brought immortality to light through the Gospel"*** (2 Tim. 1:8-10).

- **God's very good news – we are saved by grace alone**

From start to finish salvation is altogether the work of God and we can add nothing to it. God's salvation is freely given to those who don't try to gain it by themselves. As human beings we assume we must work hard to impress God that we are worthy or good enough to be saved. The assumption is that if we work hard enough to be good, pray hard and give financially then hopefully God will save us. This is absolutely not true. God's salvation is altogether of God's grace and absolutely nothing to do with our good works.

We are told ten things about God's salvation:

1. **God is the author of salvation.**

   Jonah knew this when he was in the stomach of the whale (Jonah 2:9). The famous verse in John 3:16 confirms that His Son has procured our salvation. 1 Tim. 1:15 says, ***"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"***. So any efforts we make are excluded altogether.

2. **Believers are already saved here and now.** (2 Tim. 1:9)

   God **has** saved us! God already has the intention to save us and He is saving us now. He will save us until we spend eternity with Him. Once we really grasp that salvation is altogether of God's grace and God's work from start to finish, we are filled with a sense of relief and are able to move into the joy of full assurance knowing that we are saved. [See 1 Jn. 5:13]

3. **God saved us before He called us.**

   In the purposes of God we were saved before we knew about it. So how could we have contributed anything to our salvation? We were saved when we first believed on the Lord Jesus (Acts 16:31), when we came to the Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:37) and when we welcomed Him into our lives. (Rev. 3:20)

4. **We are saved in order <u>to be made</u> holy and not because we are holy.**

   There was not a spark of goodness in us when the Lord Jesus saved us. So we were not saved because we were good nice people. The Lord Jesus saved us when we were sinners. His purpose was to make us holy. Any holiness we may have now has been given to us through the grace of God. Never think that the Lord Jesus saved you because there was even a spark of goodness in you! He saved you because He wanted you to become holy. (1 Thess. 4:3, 7 and 1 Pet. 1:15-16)

5. **Our salvation has nothing to do with anything we have done that we think are "good works".**

   We think of good works as things like giving to charity. We don't have to 'do our best' in the hope that perhaps God will save us. In God's eyes the 'best' things about us are like 'dirty rags'. We have no rights and we are on our way to a lost eternity (hell). But God, in His amazing love for us, has reached down and saved us. He has made us His own. He has done this through the gift and sacrifice on the Cross and the Resurrection of His Son, the Lord Jesus. We can't be saved from the penalty of sin by our own good works nor can these save us from the sin's power over us or the presence of sin. Why does God save us?

6. **God saves us "according to His own purpose".**

   This is very wonderful! We are saved through believing in Our Saviour (Acts 16:31), by coming to Him (Jn. 6:37) and by welcoming Him into our lives. (Rev. 3:20) But primarily we are saved because it was His great, glorious and merciful purpose to save us. (Jn. 15:16)

7. **God's salvation is altogether of grace.**

   It seems that Paul can't find enough words to emphasise that the whole of our salvation from start to finish is all of God's grace! Why? Any salvation by works alone would be a most unfair system! If God only saved people on the basis of their good manners and their good character, it would be unjust. Consider a person who grew up in a poor, ungodly home and was poorly educated. That person would have far less chance of being saved by good works than a man brought up in a good, sheltered Christian middle-class home. So God saves all of us in the same way. He saves us quite apart from our goodness or any merit of our own.

8. **God's gift to us is salvation now and forever.**

   Rom. 6:23, ***" … the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*** You can't work for a gift. You can only receive it. If you try and pay it back even in the smallest amounts, the gift ceases to be a gift and becomes a purchase. It is quite impossible to buy God's salvation! It is God's gift to you!

9. **This salvation is "in Christ Jesus".**

   This salvation is given to us in Christ Jesus. So we don't have to do anything in order to receive this gift. (2 Tim. 2:10)

10. **"God saved us before the world began."**

    Look again at 2 Tim. 1:9, ***"By the power of God, who saved us …. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time."*** This is true! So how could I contribute anything to my salvation?

God's Very Good News

"Who has saved us and called us to a holy life … because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but has now been revealed through the appearing of Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." (2 Tim. 1:9)

So what is the 'good news'? God saved us! This is very good news because we can't save ourselves and no one else can save us! At the birth of the Lord Jesus on Christmas Day angels proclaimed ***"A Saviour who is Christ the Lord".*** (Lk. 2:10-11) This is what Paul constantly preached. On his first missionary journey he preached ***"the message of salvation"***. In Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:26) and in Philippi (Acts 16:17) and yet again in Ephesus (Acts 16:17 and Eph. 1:23) he preached the same message.

So Paul writes about the Gospel that we are saved by the Lord Jesus through God's purpose, grace and call and never by our own works and deeds. Paul is repeating himself, for in 1 Tim. 1:12-17 he outlines the Gospel. He did this in his first letter (Galatians). Paul never changed the context of the Gospel with the passing of the years. There is only one Gospel of Salvation. We may have to change our vocabulary and even the language in order to make it understood by different cultures or by different people but Paul reviews for Timothy (and for us) what it is, where it comes from and on what it rests.

The God who saved us at the same time also ***"called us with a holy calling"***. We are called to a life of holiness as well. This is a major emphasis in many of Paul's letters. Here are some examples:

"For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life." (1 Thess. 4:1)

"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours." (1 Cor. 1:2)

So salvation is far more than forgiveness. God saves us and simultaneously calls us to be holy. But there is a third gift – immortality! Salvation is a word of great majesty! God's purpose is that we should be justified, sanctified and glorified.

This involves:

- ✓ pardoning us for our sins
- ✓ accepting us as righteous in God's sight through what the Lord Jesus did for us on the Cross
- ✓ progressively transforming us by His Holy Spirit into the likeness of the Lord Jesus until finally we become sinless when we get to heaven with new bodies in a new world. Hebrews 2:3 calls this, ***"such a great salvation"***.

Where does this great salvation come from?

Paul says, ***"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. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel"***. (2 Tim. 1:9-10)

So, at its source, the 'river of salvation' started back in the past eternity before time began. Clearly the source of our salvation is not at all in our good works. God gave us His purposes of grace long before we did anything good, before history, before time – in eternity. The emphasis is that our salvation is due to God's grace alone. It is not as a result of anything we have done in time. It is due only to God's purpose and only for God's good pleasure. This has a very practical purpose it helps us to be deeply humble and filled with gratitude and eliminates all boasting! It also brings to us a sense of peace and assurance because nothing can remove fear that we might lose our salvation like the knowledge that my safety depends not on my choices but on God's own purposes of grace.

The ground of our salvation on which it rests

Our assurance of salvation is firmly grounded on the historical work of the Lord Jesus. He accomplished two great things:

1. He abolished death.
2. He ***"brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel"*** (2 Tim. 1:10)

The Lord Jesus abolished death!

Death summarises our human predicament. Death is the 'wage' sin pays. It is a grim penalty. (Rom. 6:23) The Bible speaks of death in 3 ways:

- physical death – the separation of our souls from our bodies
- spiritual death – the separation of our souls from God
- eternal death – the separation of both our souls and our bodies from God for ever

All are due to our sin. They are a terrible but just reward for our sin. But the Lord Jesus 'abolished' death. Clearly this doesn't eliminate it. We know it is an everyday experience for believers. All human beings die physically and will continue to do so with the exception of the generation who are alive when the Lord Jesus returns to earth in great glory. But there is also what the Bible calls 'the second death' – a truly terrible expression used in Rev. 20:14. ***"Then death and Hades*** (hell) ***were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death."*** Again in Rev. 21:3-4, ***"Now the dwelling of God is with men and He will live with them. They will be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away"***.

In some of his other letters Paul wrote about the final abolition of death in the future as the last enemy of God to be destroyed. (1 Cor. 15:26) When the Lord Jesus returns, the resurrection of the dead will occur and we shall be able to shout with great joy, ***"Death is swallowed up in victory!"*** (1 Cor. 15:54)

Paul is stating that the Lord Jesus, at His first appearing, decisively defeated death – made it ineffective, powerless and nullified. So we, as believers in the Lord Jesus, can shout out in defiance, ***"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*** (1 Cor. 15:55) The Lord Jesus has broken the power of death!

As believers in the Lord Jesus, physical death is no longer dreaded. For believers, death is simply falling asleep. But it is much more than that. It is positive gain because it is the gateway to being "with Christ" which is "far better". It is one of the possessions that becomes ours when we are in Christ – belonging to Him. (1 Thess. 4:11, 15; Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 3:22-23) As believers, death will never separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:38-39). So instead of spiritual death, believers in the Lord Jesus look forward to eternal life in communion with God starting here on earth, but perfected in heaven.

The Lord Jesus has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

By His death and resurrection the Lord Jesus abolished death for us. What He did for us on the Cross offers us fullness of life now and immortality later as well as an incorruptible body in the future. Only God has immortality in Himself, but now the Lord Jesus will give immortality to us. After the resurrection, our bodies will share this immortality. (1 Cor. 15:42, 52-54) We will also receive an inheritance. (1 Pet. 1:4)

There are some hints of this in the Old Testament – life after death – but there is no clarity on this. The Gospel puts the floodlights on this amazing offer of immortal life through the triumph over of death by our Lord Jesus on the Cross.

Remember that it is Paul who is writing this in his dreadful cell expecting his own death imminently and yet in the very presence of death he can shout aloud that the Lord Jesus has abolished death! In our culture, we have very largely lost any certainty of the victory of the Lord Jesus. Far from being prepared for death, our modern society has made death almost unmentionable. We spend a lot of effort and money to avoid dying and when death comes, there is either total despair or excessive triviality. A searching test to apply to any religion is its attitude to death. In our British culture people wear black clothes and sing mournful songs. The process of dying can be very painful and bereavement can be very sorrowful for we miss someone we loved. But for us death itself has been defeated. ***"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord".*** (Rev. 14:13) On my tombstone I wouldn't like R.I.P. (Rest in Peace) but rather a joyful, certain affirmation, "Christ has abolished death!" Howard is not here. He is with God.

The Gospel offers us re-creation and transformation into the holiness of the Lord Jesus now that will be completed later in heaven. The source of this is God's eternal purpose in grace. The ground is the appearing of the Lord Jesus in this world and the abolition of death.

Putting all this together, there are five stages by which the saving purposes of God unfold:

- the eternal gift to us in the Lord Jesus of His grace
- the historical appearing of the Lord Jesus to abolish death by His death on the Cross and His subsequent resurrection
- the personal call of God to us sinners through the preaching of the Gospel
- the moral lives of believers made holy by the Holy Spirit
- our heavenly perfection in which this holy calling is completed

Isn't it amazing that Paul wrote this in his miserable underground cell while allowing his heart and mind to soar into eternity in this way?

Our duty in relation to God's Gospel (2 Tim. 1:11-18)

If we were able to ask Paul what is our first duty in relation to God's Gospel, I think he would say, 'Believe it and live by it.' If we are to do this, there are 3 'duties':

- **Our duty to communicate the Gospel** (2 Tim. 1:7-8, 11)

God enables us by His Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

1. **The Holy Spirit gives us power**. ***"God has … given us spirit of power"***. Compare this with Acts 1:8, ***"And you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be My witnesses"***.
2. **The Holy Spirit enriches us with His love**. The greatest way the Holy Spirit enriches our lives is by God's love poured into our lives. How much we need to be filled with love for others – especially the "lost"!

It is never enough to screw up our determination and say, "Today I'm going to be more loving". Such resolutions never work! Only the Holy Spirit can enrich your whole life with love.

3. **The Holy Spirit will deliver us from fear**. Paul mentions 3 fears we will be delivered from:

   ✓ **The fear of reproach and persecution** (1:8)

   If we are to be faithful to the Lord Jesus we shall certainly know something of antagonism and persecution. It is easy to hear this and try to escape it. But Prov. 29:25 says, ***"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe"***.

   Mt. 5:10-12 says, ***"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you falsely and say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."***

   The Holy Spirit has been given to us so we may be freed completely from the fear of man, the fear of reproach, the fear of persecution and the fear of suffering. 1 Pet. 4:14-16, 19 says, ***"If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. …. If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. So those who suffer according to the will of God should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."***

   ✓ **The fear of death** (1:9-10)

   All of us by nature are afraid of death, but the Holy Spirit has been given to us that we may be completely freed from all fear of death because ***"The Lord Jesus has destroyed death and brought immortality to light through the Gospel"***. When we are afraid, we need to ask the Holy Spirit who dwells within us to drive out our fears.

   ✓ **The fear of judgement**

   This is mentioned in 2 Tim. 1:12, 18. It is the fear of that day when we will appear at the judgement seat of the Lord Jesus. But we never have to fear we will be judged for our sins since the Lord Jesus has borne our judgement in His death on the Cross. (Rom. 8: 1-2) So we are delivered from the fear of reproach and persecution and the fear of death and judgement.

4. **The Holy Spirit indwells us to give us spiritual discernment and sound judgement**. Writing to the believers in Corinth Paul said, ***"My message and my preaching were not with wise persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on man's wisdom but on God's power"***.

Lift up your heart in thanksgiving for there is nothing we need more than wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge. All these are available in the person of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us so that day by day we may live lives pleasing to God.

The measure in which we experience His emancipation, His empowering, His enrichment and His enlightenment is exactly in proportion to the measure of our yieldedness to Him and our appropriation of His indwelling presence.

➢ **Our duty to suffer for the Gospel** (2 Tim. 1: 12)

"That is why I am suffering as I am." Paul briefly mentions this theme that he expands in 2 Tim. 2. Here he emphasises that he isn't asking Timothy to do something he isn't prepared to experience.

Why should we expect to suffer in this way? What is it about the Gospel that causes people to hate it (and us) and to oppose it? It is the completely undeserved freedom of the Gospel that offends. We naturally hate to admit the gravity of our sin, our guilt and our helplessness to save ourselves. We don't like it that all we have to do is depend on God's grace and goodness since the Lord Jesus bore our sins and their guilt by His death on the Cross to save us. So we have an enormous debt of gratitude to Him. This is what Paul meant by ***"the stumbling block of the Cross".*** (1 Cor. 1:23-24) We want to be saved by our own merits instead of the merit of the Lord Jesus and His death on the Cross on our behalf.

The fact is that no one can speak/preach about the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus with faithfulness and escape opposition and even persecution.

- **Our duty to guard the Gospel** (2 Tim. 1:13-18)

"Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in our lives." The Gospel is ***"a pattern of sound teaching"***. Earlier Paul called the Gospel ***"the whole counsel of God"*** (Acts 20:27). Paul gave these "sound words" to Timothy as an 'outline' – perhaps like an architect who develops his plans for the building of a house.

So Timothy must preach, teach and amplify Paul's teaching. He must use Paul's preaching and discipling as a model and guide for his own ministry. He should not depart from it. He should do this with the help of the Holy Spirit.

To "guard" is the same word used for the 'guards' in Nero's palace who were there to stop thieves and assassins. Paul was aware that there were false teachers around. (Acts 22:20) There were also so-called 'Christians' bent on corrupting the Gospel and so robbing the believers of the priceless treasure entrusted to them. Timothy (and we ourselves) must be always on the watch – guarding the Gospel lest we are robbed of our priceless treasure.

Paul then gives an example of a failure to guard the Gospel. ***"You know that everyone in Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes."*** Ephesus was the capital of the Roman Province of Asia. We don't know why these two men deserted Paul. Paul was the founder of many of the churches in "Asia" (now called Turkey). He had worked there for several years. He had now been arrested for the second time by Nero who clearly planned to destroy all Christians. He did in fact try to do this. We don't know anything about Phygelus and Hermogenes. Perhaps they were ring-leaders in the apostasy in these 'Asian' churches who were deserting Paul and disavowing his teaching and authority. Perhaps in a dark moment Paul was tempted to think that the Gospel was on the edge of extinction!

But no! Some were still loyal! Onesiphorus "refreshed" Paul and helped him in other ways. [In Greek the name Onesiphorus means 'a bringer of profit'.] He visited Paul in prison in Rome as well as often in Ephesus. Paul says, ***"May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day."*** v. 18

It seems that "everybody else" among the believers in 'Asia' had turned from Paul and his teaching. It was in this situation that Timothy was to guard the Gospel with the help of the Holy Spirit. Then Paul goes on to say, ***"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. 12

The 'him' could be the Lord Jesus and this would be a totally true statement. Or possibly it could be Timothy. The Lord Jesus had given Paul the task of guarding the Gospel, but now Paul is entrusting the Gospel to Timothy to sustain the same preaching and guarding the Gospel role in Asia.

God Himself is the only true guarantor of the Gospel and He will preserve it! But it is also our role as we see our evangelical faith being spoken against everywhere. It is ridiculed everywhere in this generation. But don't be afraid! God will never allow the light of the Gospel to be totally extinguished. So each one of us must play our part in guarding and defending the truth. God has put this Gospel as a deposit in our hands. But praise God, He has not taken His own hands off it! He is the great and final guardian. He will preserve its truth – the truth He has committed to His church and His people.

So our first duty is to **communicate** the Gospel perhaps using new ways of making it known throughout the world. If we do this, we shall undoubtedly suffer for it. The true preaching of the Gospel has never been popular. It humbles us sinners too much, so we tend to want to eliminate all those elements that cause offence and opposition.

But we must resist this temptation! We must **guard** it faithfully and **spread** it actively. We must also **suffer** for it bravely. This is our three-fold duty.

Chapter 2

Introduction

In 2 Timothy 1 Paul wrote to Timothy about himself. Now in chapter 2 he writes about the task to which Timothy is called. A man should be what he should be in order that he might do what he must do. A key concept in this is the word 'sent'. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, ***"Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves".*** (Lk. 10:3) There is a costliness in being a disciple of the Lord Jesus and, as a Christian, there is a hardness in being sent. In v. 1-7 we learn that the task will involve trials and so the worker must be strong. But you can't be strong unless you are strengthened. It is the grace of God that strengthens us.

So Timothy was to be strong. There was no need to be weak, no need to be fearful and no need to draw back because of the hardness of the way. We can be toughened up by the grace of God.

What did Timothy have to do that was so hard? He had to be strong in creating leadership. This is a need in every generation. We read in Genesis 18:19, ***"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation and all the nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, by doing what is right and just"***.

Again we read in Psalm 78:5-6, ***"He*** (God) ***decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, so they in turn would tell their children."***

Gal. 1:15 says, ***"But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man …."***

The Charge to Suffer for the Gospel (2 Tim. 2:1-26)

- **Learning to handle the truth** (2:1-26)

"You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

As we saw in chapter 1, there had been a major 'landslide' from the Gospel in Asia (Turkey today). So Paul urges Timothy to stand his ground in the midst of this 'slide' from the Christian faith. Timothy had been called to responsible leadership in the churches in the very area where Paul's authority was being rejected. Timothy needed two things – constancy and perseverance. So in this second chapter of his letter Paul strongly encourages Timothy to be constant and to press on in the service to which God has called him.

Every one of us, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, needs to pay great attention to Paul's exhortation. In our generation we live in a similar period. Our tendency is to be inconsistent, to fluctuate and be unstable and variable. The Lord Jesus would have us be constant and persevering. Let us carefully learn from this appeal that Paul makes to Timothy and by implication to us. In this chapter Paul gives a seven-fold description of us as disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Paul isn't telling Timothy to be stoical – to set his jaw and grit his teeth. Timothy couldn't be strong in himself, but he could be inwardly strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus – i.e. he could take strength from ***"the grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus"***. Paul knew Timothy would never find resources in himself, but only in the grace of the Lord Jesus. We are totally dependent on grace for our salvation (2 Tim. 1:9) and also for all we do in service and ministry.

One of the ways Timothy had to preserve the truth was to pass it on to others. The disloyalty of the 'Asian' churches to the truth was to be halted. To do this Timothy should make every effort to transmit this truth from hand-to-hand. Paul sees this happening in four stages:

i. "The faith" was given to Paul by the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. In 2 Tim. 1:12 Paul calls this "my deposit". Paul didn't invent the Gospel. The Gospel is no man's invention – no man's composition. It doesn't rely only on human tradition. Paul had written, ***"I want you to know, brothers that the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it. Rather I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ".*** (Gal. 1:11-12)

ii. What the Lord Jesus had entrusted to Paul, Paul has entrusted to Timothy. So "my deposit" becomes "your deposit" – i.e. "***what has been entrusted to me***" (2 Tim. 1:12) is now, "***the truth that has been entrusted to you***". (2 Tim: 1:14) It is what Timothy had heard from Paul over the years and what many others had heard. So Timothy could check if he thought his memory had failed him.

iii. What Timothy had heard from Paul, Timothy must now entrust to ***"faithful men"***. This means there were some left in 'Asia'. Not all had deserted Paul's teaching! These "faithful men"/women were preachers and teachers of the Word of God. They were "God's stewards" (Titus 1:7) because God's household and God's truth had been given to them in trust. There are two requirements to being a faithful person:

- ✓ being faithful to Paul's teaching
- ✓ able to teach and equip other faithful men/women so this teaching spreads correctly and widely

iv. The people who need to be trained are those who ***"will be able to teach others also"*** – people of integrity and faithfulness in character and also in their commitment to teach so that others can understand and put the teaching into practice. They must be able to teach. (2 Tim. 2:24)

There are 4 stages in handling the truth of the Bible:

- From the Lord Jesus to Paul
- From Paul to Timothy
- From Timothy to "faithful men and women"
- From "faithful men and women" to "others also"

It starts with the teaching of the apostles and is passed down through the generations to us – rather like the Olympic torch that is lit in Greece (Mt. Olympus) and passed from one person to another over land and sea. Our "torch" that the church hands down from one generation to another is **true Biblical faith**. This Biblical faith is apostolic faith.

Paul then enlarges on the teaching ministry to which Timothy has been called. He uses six metaphors:

1. **The Dedicated Soldier** (2:3-4)

Paul had many experiences of watching Roman soldiers, both in prison and just about everywhere he went. He encourages Timothy, ***"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs"***.

- ✓ Soldiers on active service don't expect to be always safe or to have an easy time. They take hardship risk and suffering as a matter of course. They're not usually surrounded by the luxuries of living. They would probably live in a narrow tent with a great deal of hardship and unpleasantness in addition to being shot at and attacked by enemies.

  So as "Christian soldiers" we shouldn't expect an easy ride. If we are loyal to the Gospel, we can expect opposition and ridicule and in some countries imprisonment and death. So a soldier needs to "share in suffering" with his fellow soldiers.

- ✓ A soldier must be willing to concentrate. J.B. Phillips translates this verse, ***"He does not get himself entangled in business"***. He frees himself from civilian affairs to give himself wholeheartedly to satisfy his superior officer and be entirely at his commanding officer's disposal.

As disciples/soldiers of the Lord Jesus, sent into the world, we can't contract out of the work or business of the world in which we live. The opposite is true. We should be visibly conscientious in doing good things. We need to remember what Paul wrote to Timothy in his first letter. ***"Everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving".*** (1 Tim. 4:4)

So what is forbidden for the good soldier of the Lord Jesus is not all "secular" activities, but rather "entanglements" – anything that hinders him fighting the battles the Lord Jesus wants him to fight.

Paul himself was a tentmaker. He made and sold tents. He gives us two reasons why he did this. He wanted to make the Gospel free of charge – i.e. be self-supporting – and he wanted to avoid putting any obstacle in the way of the Gospel. (1 Cor. 9:12, 18)

There is also a third possible reason. Who buys tents? Travellers – in the 1st century these were mostly salesmen. So the possible buyers were travellers. If they became believers while Paul was making their tent, then they could carry the Gospel to remote towns and villages.

To one degree or another, every Christian is a soldier of the Lord Jesus. Whatever our background and temperament we can't avoid being in a great spiritual war. If we are to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must be dedicated to the spiritual battle. This will involve committing ourselves to a life of discipline and possibly suffering. We will also be committed to avoid anything that comes along that may "entangle" us and distract us.

2. **The Law-abiding Athlete** (2:5)

Paul now changes the metaphor to an athlete in the Greek games – like our Olympic Games. Every sport has its rules. These are needed for the contest itself and also for the required preparation. Every event has its prize. In the Greek games there were no medals, but the winners were given an evergreen wreath. Winning was very important, but it was a terrible shame if you broke even one of the rules.

So Paul is likening this to our 'Christian race' as disciples. We are not competing with other disciples even though in Rom. 12:10 Paul urges us to, ***"Outdo one another in showing honour!"*** Rather Paul is speaking about our training. He says, ***"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. Therefore, I don't run aimlessly … so that after I have preached to others, I myself won't be disqualified for the prize".*** (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

Heb. 12:1-2, ***"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who, for the joy set before Him, endured the Cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."***

So we are to run lawfully – within the rules. There are some who wish to see "a new morality". This really means a place where there are no rules at all and each of us can live as we like. As believers, we are not "under the law" in any way in order to win our salvation. But moral laws in the Bible are a guide to our conduct. If we don't keep the moral laws of the Bible there is no crown for us. But our law-abiding will never justify us. We are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus. If we are constantly and wilfully breaking the law, we will produce lots of evidence that we have never truly been believers in the Lord Jesus.

So we must compete according to the rules. This applies not only to our daily lives at home, but also in our work environment, our service to others and our ministry. We must build on the foundation of Christ with materials that endure rather than burn up i.e. – not wood, hay and stubble. [Read 1 Cor. 3:10-15.]

Timothy must faithfully pass on this "deposit" to faithful men. Only if we persevere to the end – fighting the good fight, finishing the race and keeping the faith can we expect that on the day we meet the Lord Jesus face-to-face we will receive ***"the Crown of Righteousness"***. (2 Tim. 4:7-8)

3. **The Hard-working Farmer** (2:6)

If the athlete must obey the rules, the farmer must work hard. Hard work was indispensable to farming to achieve productive harvests in the 1st century A.D. Perhaps it is less so in these days of mechanisation with tractors, large combine harvesters etc. Farmers in the first century depended on sweat and skill if they were to be successful. This was especially true if the soil was poor in rocky areas or the rain wasn't regular. So a good farmer had to keep working. Having put his hand to the plough, he must never look back. Unlike the life of a soldier or an athlete, the life of a farmer was usually very boring – no excitement of going into battle and experiencing the spoils of victory and no applause after winning a race.

The first share of the crops goes to the hard-working farmer and he deserves it! The good yield is due to his planning and hard work. Laziness is never a characteristic of a good farmer. If he is too lazy to plough and

allows the field to be overgrown with weeds or when it comes time to reap he is enjoying sunbathing on the beach, he will not reap a good harvest. The Book of Proverbs has much to say about this:

Prov. 10:5, ***"He who gathers crops in the summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son."***

Prov. 20:4, ***"A sluggard does not plough in season, so at harvest time he looks and finds nothing."***

Prov. 24:30-31, ***"I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgement. Thorns had come up everywhere. The ground was covered with weeds and the stone wall was in ruins."***

To what kind of harvest is Paul referring?

- ✓ **Is it a harvest of holy living?**

  The Holy Spirit is the chief farmer in our lives. He is the one who can produce a crop of Christian qualities in our lives. But this isn't by being passive! We are to ***"walk by the Spirit"*** (Gal. 5:16) and ***"sow to the Spirit".*** (Gal. 6:8) If we would reap a harvest of holiness, we mustn't neglect cultivating the field of our character. Gal. 6:7 says, ***"Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"***. There are no spiritual gains without hard work. We need to be diligent in our Bible study, in our prayer life and in our use of 'free time'. God won't bless the man or woman who pretends to be 'spiritual' so he/she can get on without other believers. Let us be hard-working farmers who have the first share of the crop.

- ✓ W**inning unbelievers to faith in the Lord Jesus is a harvest as well**.

  The Lord Jesus said, ***"The harvest is plentiful"***. Millions wait to hear the Gospel and receive it into their lives. On his first visit to the believers in Rome Paul wrote, ***"I don't want you to be unaware, brothers, I planned many times to come to you (but I have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among many other Gentiles".*** (Rom 1:13) John quotes what Jesus said, ***"Do not say four months more and then the harvest. I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest"*** (Jn. 4:3). Of course it is ***"God who gives the growth"*** in this 'spiritual harvest'. (1 Cor. 3:6-7) But we have no liberty to be passive and idle.

This idea that Christian service is hard work is unpopular in many Christian circles – the idea that we will have to work hard, toil and struggle with lots of exertion. It implies manual labour!

Paul wasn't only an apostle, he was also a tentmaker working with his hands and selling what he made mainly to commercial travellers so he could be self-supporting. What was true of 'secular' work was also true of 'spiritual' work. Paul loved to affirm others who worked hard.

Rom. 16:6, ***"Mary who has worked very hard for you."***

Rom. 16:12, ***"Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord."***

So Paul expected others to give themselves to "the ministry" as he had given himself. He wrote of 'labours', watching and hunger for he was often too busy to eat or sleep. With respect to the other apostles Paul said, ***"I worked harder than any of them".*** (1 Cor. 15:10)

There were two priorities in Paul's life, ***"Prayer and … the ministry of the Word".*** (Acts 6:4) In Colossians Paul writes of his ***"Toil, striving with all the energy which He mightily inspires within me".*** (Col. 1:29)

God's blessing rested on Paul's ministry in an amazing way. Why? I think it was the complete devotion with which he gave himself to the work. **"He gave and did not count the cost; he fought and did not heed the wounds; he toiled and did not seek for rest; he laboured and asked for no reward except the joy of doing the Lord's will."** God prospered his efforts.

So Paul used these 3 metaphors to illustrate 3 aspects of wholeheartedness which are to be found in us:

- the **dedication** of a good soldier
- the **law-abiding obedience** and training of a good athlete
- the **painstakingly labour** of a good farmer

Without these we cannot expect results.

The way to really understand these things (2:7)

"Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this."

So if Timothy is to know and understand the truth in all 3 of these metaphors he must:

- ✓ 'Think over' or 'reflect on' what Paul is teaching and then apply it to his mind. This is our human study of these things.
- ✓ Believe the promise that the Lord Jesus will help him (and us as well) to understand and have insight into all of this. This is the illumination given by the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Paul also commands Timothy to think/ponder what he has written in this letter and assures him the Holy Spirit will help him to grow in ***"understanding in everything"*** as he does so.

It is clear that Paul believed his teaching was not his own but was given him by the Lord Jesus. In v. 8 Paul writes, ***"My Gospel"*** and in v. 9 he writes, ***"God's Word is not chained"***. It is vital that we understand what Paul is saying. The Holy Spirit will use our serious study of God's Word to give us understanding as His great gift to us. Both are necessary – careful thoughtful study and prayer. As we pray and study, the Lord Jesus will give us understanding and the motivation to put it into practice.

- **Suffering – a condition of blessing** (2:8-13)

Timothy's duties as a leader were probably a strain on the robustness of his convictions and the tenacity of his calling and his purpose. He needed a heart without secret unreality, bitterness or self-seeking. These always weaken us in the 'day of trial'.

Timothy had to believe that the future belongs to the Lord Jesus in spite of all the splendour and pride of paganism which was nowhere more arrogant than in Rome where Paul was in prison and in Ephesus where Timothy was. All of what is now western Turkey flocked to Ephesus to worship the great stone goddess of Diana (Artemis). She was goddess of the moon and of hunting. She was mother goddess of Asia Minor and the centre of a fertility cult. Her ''magnificence' was a worthless shame – a hideous and degrading lie. Idolatry was found throughout the Mediterranean World. Most people were untroubled by the brilliant social life which blatantly ignored the claims of the Lord Jesus (a crucified God!). There were little clusters of humble folk meeting week by week to worship the Lord Jesus. They had found that in Him all the pomp of the world and the strength of idol worship was crushed out of existence.

The language of 2 Timothy gives the impression that Timothy didn't have a tough, robust, stubborn temperament. He appears to be fairly alone in his leadership in Ephesus. Perhaps he was the sort of person who could get fearful at the gathering storm of hostility and danger – someone whose courage and constancy in such a storm would be severely tested. Black storm clouds were threatening a rough time for the church in Ephesus.

In Rome, the Emperor Nero was known for his atrocities. He murdered his mother. In A.D. 64 much of the city of Rome was destroyed by fire. There was evidence that Nero had ordered the fire. Nero claimed the Christians were the arsonists and there were mass arrests of Christians. Among other tortures, he burnt his victims alive in public. Christians were widely attacked. Nero's actions gave legal precedent for mistreating and killing Christians. This was very difficult for Christians because they were in the position of Biblically honouring the authorities while they could be legally charged and prosecuted just on the grounds that they were followers of the Lord Jesus. So throughout the Roman Empire the church and Christians were persecuted everywhere. Within the church there were other corrupting influences.

Timothy was feeling the impending loss of Paul whose vivid, penetrating, inspired leadership had been such a help and example in the past. Paul was a great motivator and a constant guide and encourager for him. So, ***"Remember Jesus Christ"*** (not Paul) – the living and everlasting Lord – not abstract theology but an ever-present Lord Jesus.

So when hardships press heavily and self-discipline is tedious, it is then that Timothy must remember the Lord Jesus. Abstract theology is of no value, but the Lord Jesus is ever present by His Spirit. The Lord Jesus worked to the point of weariness. He never just pleased Himself. He was despised, rejected, betrayed, deserted and put to death on the Cross. But He was victorious!

We must always remember Him – our infinite Majesty on high with all authority and power over everything and everybody. He has abolished the word 'impossible' from any task He has asked us to do. He has made us adequate for any and all situations He allows to come into our lives. He is our never-sleeping Guardian who knows all our needs and will never fail us, never forget and never forsake us. He is the One under whose watchful care we serve. We are secure in His arms and upheld by His interceding for us. We triumph by His life and will be crowned by His love. So when our cries of need go up to Him, He will be our strength against despondency, irresolution, cowardice and sloth.

Paul and Timothy seem to have had very different temperaments. Paul, in spite of some ill-health, had a great intensity of purpose, tenacity to principles and a vehemence of will. Any opposition to his judgement tended to be rejected. Timothy, by nature, saw that opposition meant distress and pain. Firmness was difficult and stressful. Some people lack a useful form of obstinacy that gives them the power to endure. If I am deficient in some area of my character, it is hard to attain proficiency in that area. In 1 Corinthians and Philippians we are given the impression that Timothy was very unselfish and had a great capacity for generous devotion to being a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my Gospel for which I'm suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's Word is not chained. 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. Here is a trustworthy saying: [it was probably an early Christian hymn.]

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." (2:8-13)

So Paul is saying that nothing truly worthwhile is ever easy. No soldier, no athlete, no farmer expects results without labour or suffering. Paul goes on to re-enforce this truth from experience.

1. **The experience of the Lord Jesus** (2:8)

The command to ***"remember Jesus Christ"*** at first seems extraordinary! How could Timothy forget him? Yet our human memories begin to fade. In the Old Testament how often did the People of God forget? They forgot their history, they forgot God's warning and they quickly found themselves in a 'hard place'. The Lord Jesus deliberately instituted the Last Supper as a remembrance event. But over the centuries Christians have often forgotten the Lord Jesus and have engaged in actual warfare against each other often over petty issues.

So why is it so vital that we should remember the Lord Jesus? It is because He is the very heart of the Gospel. The Gospel wasn't invented by Paul; rather it was entrusted to him. Paul now tells Timothy that he too is to guard the Gospel – never forget the Lord Jesus and keep preaching about Him. In particular he is to remember the Lord Jesus ***"descended from David"*** and the Lord Jesus ***"risen from the dead"***.

"Descended from David" implies the humanity of the Lord Jesus. ***"Risen from the dead"*** implies the divinity of the Lord Jesus. Paul says, ***"The Gospel He promised beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, regarding His Son, who, as to His human nature, was a descendant of David and 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."*** (Rom. 1:2-4)

Timothy was also to remember His work. His greatest work was His death to remove the consequences of our sins. He was raised to prove the efficacy of His sin-bearing sacrifice.

So the Lord Jesus is both Our Saviour and also Our King as He is descended from King David. He illustrates the great Biblical principle that death is the gateway to life and suffering is the path to life. The Lord Jesus was born in very humble circumstances in Bethlehem, the 'city of David', but now He is reigning in glory. The contrast is between humiliation and exaltation.

Paul was saying to Timothy, "When you are tempted to avoid pain, humiliation, suffering or even death in your ministry, remember the Lord Jesus and think again".

2. **The experience of the Apostle Paul** (2:9-10)

" … for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's Word is not chained. 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."

Paul is in his cell suffering the indignity of being treated like a common criminal even though he was a Roman citizen and was innocent of any crime. Paul was in chains, but the Gospel was not! At his first defence he had proclaimed the Gospel in court while he was on trial. He explains this in 2 Tim. 4:16-17.

There is a contrast between Paul's suffering and the effectiveness of the Gospel. But the relationship is really one of cause and effect. Paul's suffering causes others to hear the Gospel ***"in order that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"***.

This is an amazing statement! The salvation of others is secured by Paul sufferings! But this is so! Paul's sufferings have none of the redemptive power of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, but the 'elect' are saved by the preaching of the Gospel and Paul knew he couldn't preach the Gospel without suffering for it!

3. **Our common experience as Christians worldwide** (2:11-13)

Paul is probably quoting from an early Christian hymn. It consists of two pairs of axioms of the Christian life that apply to all believers. The first pair relates to believers who remain true to their faith. The second pair relates to those who become faithless.

✓ ***"If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him."***

This implies that by our union with the Lord Jesus we have died to both self and safety. Paul wrote, ***"I die every day"*** (1 Cor. 15:31) and ***"… always carrying in our body the death of Jesus"*** (2 Cor. 4:10).

So our Christian lives are depicted as a life of dying and a life of enduring. Only if we share in Christ's death on earth will we share in His life in heaven. Only if we share His sufferings and endure, will we share His reign in heaven.

✓ ***"If we deny Him, He will also deny us."***

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

This pair of epigrams sees the dreadful possibility of our denying Christ's and so proving ourselves faithless. The Lord Jesus warned us of this, ***"Whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven"*** (Mt. 10:38). The faithfulness of the Lord Jesus implies He will be faithful in applying His warnings – He will carry them out for, ***"He cannot deny Himself".***

Does this mean there is something God cannot do? Yes! God is omnipotent, but He never uses His power arbitrarily. God chooses only to do good, only to work according to the perfection of His character and will. So God remains for ever Himself – the God of mercy and justice, fulfilling all His promises whether of blessing or of judgement. He gives us life if we die with Christ and the Kingdom if we endure, but He denies us if we deny Him – just as He warned – because He cannot deny Himself.

Paul is hammering home a simple lesson using well-understood analogies of soldiers, athletes and farmers and also the experience of the Lord Jesus and every believer since then until now: Blessing and fruitfulness come through pain. Fruit comes through hard work. Life comes from death and glory through suffering.

We have no grounds to think it will be easy for us or others. The truth is: no pain – no gain. No cross – no crown. We see this principle so clearly in the life of the Lord Jesus: His shameful, terrible death to His glorious resurrection and heavenly reign. This principle caused Paul to be in prison in chains awaiting execution. It is ridiculous for us to expect our lives, as followers of the Lord Jesus, will cost us nothing!

The last three metaphors for Timothy and for us (2:14-26)

A **workman** who has no need to be ashamed or 'how to gain God's approval' (v. 15)

The metaphor of **the clean vessel** (v. 20-22)

The metaphor of **the Lord's Servant** (v. 23-26)

4. A workman who has no need to be ashamed (v. 15)

Several facts are evident from this encouragement to Timothy to be an "unashamed workman". The work a Christian workman does is teaching. The key is, ***"correctly handling the Word of Truth"*** – i.e. the Bible.

There are two kinds of workmen – those who are approved – who have been tested like coins or metal so they are recognised as being sterling. Those who are approved have ***"no need to be ashamed",*** but those who fail the test should be deeply ashamed. The difference between those who are approved and those who fail is how they handle the Word of Truth.

Timothy is to be a good workman, approved and not ashamed. Paul gives him an example of the bad workmen – Hymenaeus and Philetus (v. 7). He says they have, ***"wandered away from the truth".*** In dealing with the truth, a good workman "cuts straight" – the NIV has ***"correctly handles"***. We read in Prov. 3:5-6, ***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and He will make your paths straight."*** Again in Prov. 11:5, ***"The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them."***

So what was the picture Paul wanted Timothy to understand? It was probably a road cutting straight across the countryside. Near to Cambridge there is a road made by the Romans about 2000 years ago that goes from Cambridge to Colchester – 50+ miles. It is completely straight along its whole length. This was so Roman troops could get rapidly from one place to another.

So "the Word of Truth" of the apostolic faith Timothy had received from Paul was to teach Scripture (the Bible) accurately and plainly so it could be easily understood and followed. We must be true to it. We must not distort or falsify it and we must try never to confuse people.

In Acts 13:6-12 there is an account of Paul and Barnabas in Paphos, Cyprus where they confronted a false prophet called Bar-Jesus (son of Jesus) who was trying to prevent the Roman Proconsul hearing the Gospel. Paul spoke directly to the sorcerer and he became blind. The good workmen handles the Bible with great care making sure he is on "the straight path" himself and avoiding all the byways.

The opposite of a good workman is a bad workman! Paul's metaphor is drawn from archery. Truth is like a shot aimed at a specific target. But the archer, either deliberately or through carelessness, misses the target. The New English Bible translates the Greek, ***"shot wide of the truth"***.

So the Word of Truth is the target and as we shoot at this target we either hit it or miss. The Word of Truth is also a road. As we construct this road across the countryside we should make it as straight as possible and certainly not crooked.

Paul is emphasising to Timothy that the way he teaches will affect others for better or for worse. If he cuts a straight road, people will be able to follow and so will reach their destination. But he can also miss the target. The attention of the spectators will be distracted from the target since their eyes will follow the arrow and they will go astray.

Paul warns Timothy that there are those in Asia Minor – i.e. Turkey today – teaching serious error. Paul preached the true Gospel including, ***"Jesus Christ risen from the dead".*** (v. 8) He taught this as the pattern for all believers. We will all be raised from the dead. But there were false teachers teaching that the resurrection was already past (v. 18). This false teaching was destroying the faith of many since these false teachers denied a bodily resurrection to come.

[For some of the background to this false teaching see Acts 17:32, ***"When they heard about the resurrection of the dead some of them sneered …."*** See also 1 Cor. 15:12-14, ***"But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then even Christ has not been raised and if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith"***.]

In the 2nd century A.D. a major heresy developed in the Christian church in the Eastern Mediterranean called Gnosticism. This taught that the body was an evil encumbrance and the concept of a bodily resurrection was highly undesirable. Similarly today there are advocates of de-mythologising many aspects of the Biblical Christian faith.

Such people were replacing "the Word of Truth" and ***"quarrelling about words"*** or "splitting hairs" or getting involved in "godless chatter" leading people into more and more ungodliness. Such talk works its way into fellowships like gangrene. (v. 17)

So the damage caused by such false teaching is twofold. It is "godless" and "gangrenous"! It causes believers to get into more ungodliness. It spreads infection in the whole of the believing community. "… ***It is of no value and only ruins those who listen"*** (v. 14). J.B. Phillips writes in his paraphrase, ***"Their teachings are as dangerous as blood poisoning and spread like sepsis from a wound"*** and ***"They are upsetting the faith of some***". (v. 18)

But God's solid foundation stands secure (v. 19)

Often the work of the church is difficult. The progress of the Gospel is slow and there are many setbacks. In spite of this, we can be very optimistic because of this verse. The foundation is absolutely secure. It is immovable! This should give us **enormous confidence**! The foundation was laid by God. The foundation is the true church of Jesus Christ together with the Holy Spirit. We need not fear for the safety of the church of Jesus Christ! In his great hymn William Cowper wrote:

"Dear Dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till <u>all</u> the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

The foundation of God will never be destroyed. So all will be well! This is our great confidence. It is a very great comfort as well.

"The Lord knows those who are His." (2:19) He doesn't just know us all in a general way. He actually knows each one of us extremely well and He loves us very deeply. This is our security. He has made us His own by election, by His call on our lives and by the miracle of the new birth through the application of the blood of the Lord Jesus removing our sins and the operation in our hearts and lives of the Holy Spirit.

But in 2 Timothy 3:5 some ***"have a form of godliness but deny its power"***. We will come back to this when we look at chapter 3. But the Lord knows who are His. This is a comfort for two reasons:

- **We have the guarantee of His <u>protection</u>**. ***"The Lord knows who are His"***. He looks at each of us and says, "You are Mine!" Jn. 10:14-15, 28-29 puts it like this, ***"I am the Good Shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father and I lay down My life for the sheep" … "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of My Father's hand"***.

- **We have the guarantee of His <u>purpose</u>** – ***"The Lord knows"***. God is working out all His gracious purposes in the lives of His people. Phil 1:6 says, ***"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"***.

A Word of Caution

The Lord Jesus came to save us from our sins. ***" ... and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins".*** (Mt. 1:21) So we are to depart from worldliness. ***"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father, but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever."*** (2 Tim. 2:4 and 1 Jn. 2:15-17)

We are to depart from impurity – ***"Flee the evil desires of youth".*** (v. 22) ***" … Snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy mixed with fear …."*** (Jude 23) ***"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."*** (2 Cor. 7:1)

We are also to depart from pride, ***"And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him, he must gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth."*** (2:24-25)

The first mark of a real Christian is that he/she is meek and lowly in heart, ***"Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls".*** (Mt. 11:29)

So Paul gives us two ways to detect a new heresy:

- What is its attitude to God? Does it dishonour God?
- What effect does it have on believers?

Truth always honours God. It always promotes godliness. ***"They came to know God, but by their actions they denied Him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good."*** (Tit. 1:16)
But truth always builds up believers in the Lord Jesus in faith, in their capacity to love God and others and in a life of holiness.

Although believers may ***"wander from the truth"*** (v. 18), the foundation of God's truth remains secure. Believers are the true church and God is building His church rapidly around the world today although in some areas it is under severe attack. Believers under attack need to remember two comforting truths found in v. 19:

" … God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription 'The Lord knows those who are His' ".

The second comforting truth is public and is clearly visible, ***"Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness"***. We prove that we are true believers in the Lord Jesus by our holy living.

So Paul is saying that it is only the Lord who knows and recognises His own people. He can tell the true believers from the false, for He is the only one who can see our hearts. We can't see people's 'hearts', but we can see their lives and these are reliable evidence of their true spiritual condition.

Both of these "proofs" are essential – the divine proof unseen by us and the human proof that we can see in the lives of believers. Together these bear witness to God's "solid foundation" in the real disciples of the Lord Jesus and collectively in the believers – God's true church.

5. The Metaphor of the Clean Vessel (2 Tim. 2:20-22)

The picture Paul uses here is clear. Every house has pots and pans of various sorts as well as plates and cups/mugs. It also has many different kinds of utensils such as knives, forks, spoons etc. In the houses of the rich these would be many and varied. The gold and silver ones would be for "noble" uses – special occasions or for special guests. Then there were other utensils "of wood and earthenware". These were cheap. They broke easily and could be replaced. They were mainly used in the kitchen and perhaps for family meals.

So how should we understand this metaphor? The "large house" is clearly God's house – visible churches of believers. But what are the vessels? When the Lord Jesus spoke to Ananias about the newly converted Saul of Tarsus, He said, ***"He*** (Paul) ***is a chosen vessel*** (instrument) ***of Mine to carry My name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel*** – i.e. the Jews (Acts 9:15). In 2 Cor. 4:7 Paul uses this analogy again, ***"We have this treasure in earthen vessels*** (pots)***"***!

So Paul was a vessel and we are vessels. Our role, like Paul's, is to carry the Gospel of the Lord Jesus to unbelievers. The Gospel is the treasure. We are just fragile pottery.

But there are two types of vessels – the gold and silver ones for "noble" use and the earthenware pots for "ignoble" use. Who do these two types of disciples represent? I think Paul is saying that there are two types of teachers in the church. Those who are gold and silver are the authentic teachers of the Bible. Then there are other crackpots/bogus teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus.

So Paul gives us two metaphors: good and bad workmen and noble and ignoble vessels. Paul writes to Timothy, ***"If a man cleanses himself … he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work".*** (2:21) There is no higher honour in this life than to be an

instrument in the hands of the Lord Jesus – to be always at His disposal for His purposes – to be available whenever needed for His service.

But note that the Master of the house lays down a condition for His use. His vessels must be clean! The promises depend on this. So there must be self-purification before we can be useful to the Lord Jesus. But what is this? How are we to purify ourselves?

The Lord Jesus told the parable of a farmer sowing seeds in a field. As the wheat grew so did the weeds and they could only be separated at harvest-time. It is the teachers who are indicated by the two vessels. The implication is that we must hold ourselves completely separate from false teachers who deny some of the fundamentals of the Gospel. ***"Timothy, my son, I give you these instructions to keep … so that by following them you might fight the good fight, holding on to the faith and with a good conscience. Some have rejected these and have shipwrecked their faith."*** (1 Tim. 1:18-19)

This is very good news! ***"If anyone purifies himself … He will be a vessel for noble use"***. As a consecrated vessel (permanently set apart) he will be useful to the master of the house and ready for any good work. The condition is that the vessel should always be clean. The need is for purity of doctrine and purity of life. Both are essential if we are to be used in the service of the Lord Jesus. Paul emphasises this personal holiness in two verses:

"Let everyone who confesses the name of the Lord Jesus depart from iniquity." (v. 22)

"So shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness." (Rom. 6:13)

Negatively, Timothy must shun any sort of self-assertion, self-indulgence, selfish ambition and any obstinacy in getting his own way together with any form of arrogance or pride. Finally he must shun ***"the wayward impulses of youth"***. (NEB)

Positively, Timothy is to pursue time in the company of ***"Those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart"***. This implies that Timothy is to spend time with others who share his hunger for a righteous life.

Paul is strongly encouraging us, as believers in the Lord Jesus, to "shun" or "escape from" or run away from spiritual danger as fast as possible. We read in Mt. 3:7 ***" … all sinners are urged to flee from the wrath to come."*** In 1 Cor. 10:14; 6:18 and 1 Tim. 6:11 Paul tells us to flee from idolatry, immorality, a spirit of materialism, the love of money and here from "youthful passions". James 4:7 is helpful, ***"Submit yourself then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you"***.

Sin is very dangerous to us! Never come to terms with it. Never negotiate with it. Don't let us be like Lot in Sodom who lingered in the place of evil. (Gen. 19:15-16) If we are tempted – like Joseph was by Potiphar's wife when she attempted to seduce him – we are to take to our heels and run away. (Gen. 39:12)

What positive actions can we take? We must pursue the "will of God". Paul uses the figure of a chariot race (Phil. 3:12-14). ***"I press on"*** and ***"I press on towards the goal"***. He says to Timothy, ***"But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness"***. (1 Tim. 6:11) This is put simply in 1 Cor. 14:1, ***"Follow the way of love"***. This is especially love for strangers – hospitality (Rom. 12:13) and the good of others, ***"Try to be kind to each other and to everyone else".*** (1 Thess. 5:15) Putting it another way, we should pursue peace or what makes for peace and mutual 'up-building'.

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy. Without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14)

"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification." (Rom. 14:19)

"He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it." (1 Pet. 3:11)

So when we put together Paul's strong advice to believers, we are to run away from all that is spiritually dangerous and run after all that is spiritually good for us. We must flee from the one in order to escape from it and pursue the other in order to make it our own. We are to deny ourselves and fully follow the Lord Jesus. We are to put off all that belongs to our old life and put on what belongs to our new life. We are to put to death all our earthly thoughts and set our minds on heavenly things. We are to crucify our "flesh" (our old nature) and learn to walk in the Spirit. It is a ruthless rejection of the old combined with a relentless pursuit of living holy lives. Only then will we be fit for the Lord Jesus to use us.

6. The Metaphor of the Lord's Servant (2 Tim. 2:23-26)

"Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments because you know they produce quarrels and the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him, he must gently instruct in the hope God will grant them repentance and they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will."

The metaphor has changed again. The household pots and dishes have become a slave. Paul sets out the context in which the "slave" has to live and work. It is an environment of controversy and quarrels. Perhaps an early example of the "***foolish and stupid arguments"*** was the debate between the apostles and some of the strongly Jewish believers that is recorded in Acts 15. The issue was whether Gentile believers should be circumcised. They claimed that unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you can't be saved. Peter countered this argument by saying that when Gentiles heard the Gospel, repented and put their hearts and lives at the disposal of the Holy Spirit, God accepted them. ***"God, who knows the heart, showed that He accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as He did to us. He made no distinction between them and us."*** (v. 8-9)

So Paul is referring to ***"foolish and stupid arguments"***. This was clearly a problem in the 1st century church and has continued so for the next 20+ centuries! Paul refers to this in 1 Tim. 1:4; 6:4-5 and Titus 3:9-11. ***"But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once and then warn him a second time. After that have nothing to do with him. You can be sure such a man is warped and sinful. He is self-condemned."***

"As I urged you … stay in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrine any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These people promote controversies rather than God's work which is by faith."

Clearly there were all sorts of divisions and disputes. What is it Paul is prohibiting Timothy from getting involved in? Clearly it isn't a prohibition of all controversy. When the truth of the Gospel was at stake, Paul was a controversialist. Paul even opposed Peter in public! You can read about this in Gal. 2:11-21.

"When Peter came to Antioch, I (Paul) ***opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong."*** Peter had given in to pressure from the circumcision party – those who believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

In this letter Paul is urging Timothy to guard the whole Gospel and, when necessary, contend for it. Every one of us must ***"fight the good fight of faith"***.

"Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses". (1 Tim. 6:12)

In 2 Tim. 4:7 Paul says, ***"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"***. So we must defend the faith and preserve it. What Paul is forbidding is stupid and futile arguments that cause quarrels. They are stupid because they are speculative and senseless. Why? Because they go beyond Scripture and don't submit to the intellectual discipline Scripture imposes on us. Outside the Bible we have no agreed authority and no impartial Court of Appeal. We only have our own subjective feelings, so one person's opinion on Biblical matters is as good as another's.

Over the centuries, we – the church – have ignored Paul's warnings. Many unbiblical speculations and unkind words and acts have done great damage to the cause of the Lord Jesus in this world.

So a basic characteristic of the Lord's servant – including us – is to be ***"gentle"***. (2 Tim. 2:24-25) We need to be ***"apt teachers"*** with a gift and an ability to teach. Sometimes this teaching should be negative – i.e. correcting error. The Lord's servant also needs to be positive with an attitude of being ***"kind to everyone … forbearing, gentle"***. He must remain humble, be courteous, considerate and meek. All this is the opposite of being brash, haughty and rude.

Perhaps the ideal portrait of the Lord's servant is given in the Servant Song in Isaiah 42-45. It is through the suffering of the servant that salvation, in its fullest sense, is achieved. The Lord Jesus delivered mankind from the prison of sin. Is. 52:13-53:12 is a wonderful summary of what the Lord Jesus accomplished on the

Cross. He became a ***"light for the Gentiles"*** – i.e. us! (Is. 42:6), so that all nations that faced judgement could find salvation. (Is. 13-23)

"See, I have made Him (the Lord Jesus) ***a witness to all the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely You will summon nations You know not and nations that do not know You will hasten to You, because of the Lord Your God, the Holy One of Israel, for He has endowed You with splendour."*** (Is. 55:4-5)

All these Gentile nations would then become "servants of the Lord" (Is. 54:17). These are the true believers, both Jews and all the Gentile tribes and nations, who are faithful to the Lord.

This servant is a teacher, for the Lord God gave him, ***"the tongue of those who taught"***.

"The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary." (Is. 50:4)

We know and love the wisdom of the Lord Jesus. In every conversation of His reported in the Gospels, He was so sensitive to people whose courage has been bruised and where faith had burned low. When people rose up against Him, He gave His back to the smiters and eventually was led like a sheep silent and unresisting to the slaughter. [See Is. 50:14; 42:2-3; 50:6; 53:7]

The Lord Jesus was the Servant Lord beyond all excellence. Paul writes, ***"By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you …."*** (2 Cor. 10:1) So this same meekness and gentleness must characterise all who claim to be the Lord's servants today. There is more to this than just our behaviour, for we have to correct our opponents with gentleness. If we do this, lasting good may follow.

In 2 Tim. 2:25-26 those opposing Timothy need to be ***"gently instructed"***. ***"Those who oppose Him He must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth and they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will".***

God is the only one who can deliver them by giving them ***"repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth"***. This is done through us – i.e. in a human ministry – one that avoids all quarrelling and teaches the truth with kindness and gentleness.

A Summary of 2 Timothy 2

It is the portrait of an 'ideal Christian'! There are a number of images that have to be merged and then built into us by the Holy Spirit as we ask Him to make these images real in our lives.

1. We are to be **good soldiers** in our spiritual warfare against satanic powers. We must be disciplined, detached from worldly goals and devoted to our commanding officer – the Lord Jesus.
2. We are to be **law-abiding athletes**, but with a determination to win the prize.
3. We are to be **hard-working farmers**, dedicated to our work. Good farmers require faith. We sow in faith and harvest in joy.
4. We are to be **unashamed workmen**.
5. We are to be **table/kitchen vessels – clean in our character and conduct**.
6. We are to be **the Lord's servants**, courteous and gentle in manner.

Each image lays down the condition of usefulness. We must give ourselves without reserve to our soldiering, running and farming. Only then can we expect good results. We must purify ourselves from all sin and error so we will be available for our Master's use. We must be gentle and not quarrelsome as the Lord's servants and pray and work that God will grant our adversaries repentance, knowledge of the truth and complete deliverance from all the snares of the devil.

This isn't easy! It is no wonder Paul begins 2 Tim. 2 with ***"You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ"***. Our incentive is in v. 8-10, ***"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. 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. 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."

We can't keep going as disciples of the Lord Jesus by our own willpower. We must remember the Lord Jesus. Then we will find we can put up with a great deal because we serve Him! He put up with a great deal for us. But if we are serving a human organisation, a church or a Christian agency, however good it is, there will be times when we feel like saying, 'I'm losing interest in this!' We become critical and discouraged. But remembering the Lord Jesus as we start each new day is the greatest incentive any Christian can ever have.

There are several warnings in verses 14-19. We need to ***"keep reminding*** (ourselves) ***of these things …"*** and ***"avoid godless chatter because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly".***

It is so easy to be diverted from our main purpose and be caught up in 'Christian' controversy discussing things that are profitless. Don't focus on trivialities and issues peripheral to the real Christian faith. 2 Tim. 2 urges us to ***"Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace"***. How badly our culture needs to rediscover righteousness – right with God and with one another.

The folly of stupid arguments is emphasised in v. 23-24. They are time-wasters and get us nowhere. Some of us are natural troublemakers, but we must learn to be peacemakers.

In our home in Cambridge we have many ornaments on shelves and on the walls. To us they are of great value for they help us remember the places they came from and the people who gave them to us – many friends from many countries. But we are not to be ornaments gathering dust! We are here to do a job of work, to be usable in our Master's service. This is the aim of every believer – to put a smile on the face of the Lord Jesus as we please Him in all that we do.

Chapter 3

1. The Godlessness of the Last Days (3:1-9)

Paul is locked up in his prison cell in Rome, but his deep conviction is that he is a willing "prisoner" of the Lord Jesus. He is concerned about the future of the Gospel. His mind is on the growing persecution of believers in the Lord Jesus and the future spread of the Gospel. He is concerned about Timothy whose character seems diffident and weak when the opposition is so strong. How can believers be encouraged not to reject the true Christian faith?

If Timothy thinks it's strange that so much evil should arise in the visible church, Paul wants him to learn there is much worse to follow as the end approaches. The sinfulness of human self-will will find full and unrestrained action in deed, thought and word. Men will become more and more diabolical, uncontrolled, violent, having a hatred of anything good, reckless and misled by their own conceit. Worse, those who profess to be Christians will put their love of pleasure before their love for God. There may be an outward reverence for God, but in fact there is a deliberate repudiation of His transforming power. Such people are to be avoided since they seek to impose on others who are weak in faith a guilty conscience moved by emotions and not the Holy Spirit. This causes people to submit to their weak and deprived minds.

So Timothy is going to face times of stress (v. 1-3) ***"But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days."*** Why does Paul begin this chapter with the command to, ***"Mark this"***? The ***"last days"*** are the whole time from the ascension of the Lord Jesus until His return in great glory.

"But in these last days He (God) ***has spoken to us by His Son, who He appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the universe"*** (Heb. 1:2). As the day of Christ's return comes closer, it will become more difficult, with a decline in morality and a rise in various demonstrations of evil – even among professing Christians. In 2 Thess. 2:3 Paul teaches there will be a "falling away" (Gk. *apostesia*) that will happen first.

It seems as if Paul is giving us a catalogue of early 21st century vices! We are getting more arrogant and boastful. We tend to swagger about and in our culture we are becoming increasingly scornful of others especially those who are faithful followers of the Lord Jesus who are increasingly abused. People have no regard for contractual obligations. They are "haters of good" – good things and good people.

Paul says clearly ***"avoid such people"***. Compare this with 2 Tim. 2:25, ***"Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth …."*** In chapter 2 Paul is writing about enquirers and new believers. These people in chapter 3 are only capable of doing harm and are possibly past redemption.

So now in the 21st century we must have a clear understanding of the times we live in and our work for the Lord Jesus. Remember Paul was writing to Timothy in days of fierce persecution and heresy – false teaching and bad doctrine. We live in a culture that is increasingly saying we believe in "fables". (v. 3-4) Many people in our culture are blatant in their denial of the truth of God's Word. They prefer their own opinions and preach "another gospel" – usually hedonism.

What should our response be? We are to live consistent lives that are a demonstration of the Gospel we preach. (Titus 2:10) We should have a disciplined ministry in sharing our faith with unbelievers. ***"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations … teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age".*** (Mt. 28:19-20)

The great need of today is that men and women should hear the Word of God. We are to speak with conviction. Our words should rebuke and encourage and above all tell of salvation.

Finally, we are to be motivated by the shortness of the time and the solemnity of the judgement to come. In these last days there will come times of stress and sometimes there will be great differences in the amount of stress. The history of the last 20 centuries confirms this is so. There have been periods of freedom and growth together with periods of severe persecution. These "hard to bear" periods of either physical pain or mental pain can be menacing to us believers. We need to expect them and prepare for them. They will be painful and very difficult to cope with. Why is this so?

Paul tells us why! It is because of the people in the cultures surrounding us.

- We live in times of great stress and peril.
- As time goes on, the activities of really bad men and women in the world will increase.

2. These evil people are described (v. 2-9)

"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them! They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women who are loaded down with sins and swayed by all kinds of evil desires always learning, but never able to acknowledge the truth."

Jannes and Jambres are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but according to Jewish tradition they were magicians in the Egyptian court who opposed Moses. (Ex. 7:11) In a similar way those Paul is talking about, ***"Opposed the truth – men of depraved minds who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they won't get very far because … their folly will be clear to everyone"*** (v. 9). The implication is that these men used occult powers.

In v. 6 Paul speaks of "weak women". Why? Perhaps it was because in the 1st century A.D. there was no women's education. In 1 Tim. 2:14 Paul refers to Adam and Eve and points out that she was deceived first! Occult powers corrupt the mind making it impossible to understand the truth. (Rom. 1:21-22; Eph. 4:17-18) This comparison may imply the use of similar occult powers in Ephesus where Timothy was located.

2 Tim. 3:13 says, ***"Evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived"***. Such use of occult power causes a person to sink lower in their depravity and power to deceive so they won't be able to do so without their folly being recognised.

A description of the evil people

- **Their moral conduct** (v. 2-4)

In just 3 verses Paul gives us 19 expressions to describe "the wicked" who are responsible for these times of stress in society:

- ✓ lovers of self not lovers of God – their love is misdirected
- ✓ lovers of money
- ✓ lovers of pleasure
- ✓ proud, braggarts and 'swashbucklers'
- ✓ slanderers – usually because they have a high opinion of themselves and want to speak evil of others so they will be held in contempt

  [The next 5 words refer to family life – especially the attitude of youth (teenagers) to parents.]
- ✓ disobedient to their parents [We are meant to honour our parents.]
- ✓ ungrateful – no sense of appreciation
- ✓ unholy – no devotion to God or Biblical faith
- ✓ without love – heartless with an inability to have normal human affections
- ✓ unforgiving – a situation is described in which people are so much in rebellion they aren't even willing to negotiate

The opposite of these qualities should characterise the Christian family. The relationship of children with their parents should be marked by obedience, gratitude, respect, affection and reasonableness.

[The next 7 words are wider than just the family. They include the general culture in which we live.]

- ✓ slanderers, backbiters and scandalmongers – guilty of speaking evil against others especially behind their backs
- ✓ without self-control – untamed – ungovernable

- ✓ brutal or fierce – haters of strangers and all good things and people
- ✓ treacherous (a word used in Lk. 6:16 of the traitor Judas)
- ✓ reckless – due to thoughtlessness in word and deed
- ✓ selfish – swollen with conceit and puffed up with self-importance
- ✓ proud – the basic, fundamental evil and underpinning all the others

All this unsocial, antisocial behaviour together with an absence of any restraint, loyalty, wisdom and humility is a consequence of godless self-centredness.

We are bit like hedgehogs that roll themselves up tight in a ball keeping all the warmth to themselves, but presenting to those outside very sharp spines to warn others away.

If a person is proud, arrogant and swollen with conceit, he will never sacrifice himself to serve others. God has clearly said that we are to love Him first with all our heart, our soul, our mind and our strength. We are to love our neighbour next and ourselves last. If we change the order putting ourselves first and perhaps a few of our neighbours/friends in the middle and God last then God is marginalised or excluded altogether!

- **Their religious observance** (v. 5)

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power."

It is a shock to discover that the evil people Paul is describing are also religious! But this is very often true! In the history of the world religion and morality have largely been married rather than divorced. This was true in the 7th/8th centuries B.C. when prophets like Amos spoke out strongly in the reign of Jeroboam II.

"This is what the Lord says, 'For three sins of Israel, even four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver (i.e. as slaves) ***and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane My holy name. They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of their God they drink wine taken as fines.' "*** (Amos 2:6-8)

Protection from injustice was clearly commanded by God. (Ex. 26:6-8) The Law of Moses was very clear. If there were sexual relations with a girl, marriage was obligatory. (Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:28-29) It was strictly forbidden for a father and son to have sexual relations with the same woman. (Lev. 18:7-8; 20:11-12) So there was a boom in religion mixed up with injustice. In the midst of being religious they gained clothes and wine to which they had no moral right. Immorality was fused with religion.

God said the same things through Isaiah in his day, ***"Your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you. Even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood. Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong. Learn to do right. Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless. Plead the case of the widow."*** (Is. 1:14-17)

The Lord Jesus said something very similar against the Pharisees – the ultra-religious people of His day, ***"You cleanse the outside of the cup and the plate, but the inside is full of extortion and greed and self-indulgence."*** (Mt. 23:25)

This same dreadful "disease" had spread to the people Paul was describing in 3:5, ***"Having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."*** So apparently they attended 'church'. They sang the hymns and said 'amen' to the prayers and put their money in the collection. They looked and sounded like believers. They had the form, but without the power – an outward show without the inner reality – religion without any morality – faith without any works.

But Biblical Christianity combines the external forms with true spiritual power. It encourages worship that is truly spiritual and comes both from the heart and the mind. It is sometimes expressed together with others, but it results in individual moral behaviour. Unless this is so, it is of no value and worse, it is hateful to the Lord Jesus. So Paul says ***"avoid such people"*** – ***"have nothing to do with them"***. (v. 5) This doesn't mean we are to avoid all contact with unbelievers. It was said of the Lord Jesus while He was on earth that He was the friend of publicans and sinners.

[Publicans were hated by the Jewish people in the first century A.D. This was not because they ran typical English public inns, but because they were tax gatherers. The Romans farmed out the collection of taxes to the highest bidder who then delegated their duties to others. The one condition was that they should raise as much money as possible. They were especially hated by the Jews since they were frequently dishonest and overcharged. They were also the paid servants of the hated Romans. They were considered traitors.]

Paul tells Timothy not to shun such people. He writes, ***"I have written to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of the world, who are immoral or greedy or swindlers or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave the world! But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a 'brother'*** (i.e. is pretending to be a real believer) ***but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat"***. (1 Cor. 5:9-11)

So what Paul is describing is a sort of godless Christianity. In 1 Cor. 5:1-12 Paul deals extensively with what the church leadership should do with an immoral brother or sister who is a believer.

The conclusion is that the openly evil behaviour of believers should be disciplined. If the believer refuses to repent, he/she should be put out of the fellowship of the church. ***"What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you."*** (1 Cor. 5:12-13) So Paul implies that within the church there may be 'unbelieving Christians' or 'religious sinners'. Such people should be disciplined by the leaders of the church and asked to leave if they remain unrepentant.

- **Their zeal to 'christianise' others** (3:6-9)

It is surprising that the sort of people who are so committed to 'christianising' others are the same people Paul has just described as godless people filled with self-love and malice. The Greek word used also means to 'capture' – i.e. make a prisoner of war. But it can also mean to mislead and deceive by furtive and cunning arguments. So in Timothy's church there were 'tradesmen of heresy' somehow getting into private households of believers. They appeared to concentrate on persuading 'weak women' – perhaps when their husbands were at work.

This wasn't a new strategy of the Evil One. He deceived Eve first! Paul says these weak women were ***"Loaded down with sins and swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth".*** (v. 6)

Eph. 4:14 describes such people as, ***"infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming"***.

The implication of what Paul says is important. Perhaps his mention of Jannes and Jambres in v. 8 gives us some insight into the situation in Ephesus where Timothy was leading the church. (Acts 19:18-19) We read, ***"Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practised sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls the total came to 50,000 drachmas***". (One drachma was an average daily wage!)

The false teachers in Ephesus were compared with the Egyptian magicians. So Paul was equating Timothy's situation with that of Moses! Timothy taught Biblical, apostolic faith – the "sacred deposit" – Timothy was to guard/transmit. As followers of the Lord Jesus we have the same commission.

In today's world there are many who ***"oppose the truth – men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone".*** (v. 8-11)

Today we are distressed by false teachers who oppose the truth and trouble the church and especially by the 'slippery methods' of 'religious traders'. But we have nothing to fear, even if the falsehood becomes fashionable. Believers in Biblical truth see there is much self-evident truth in the Bible. Over history, perceived "errors" in the Bible have spread and even been popular for a time. In the end they are exposed and truth is vindicated. ***"But they will not get very far because, as is the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone."*** (v. 9)

Why is this so? It is partly because we are part of God's field – the whole world. God is sowing "wheat" in His world but the devil is also sowing "seeds". (Mt. 13:24-30 and 36-43). These are the "weeds". These can be seen in the visible church among people who profess to be believers. Perhaps more often they remain hidden. They are people of immoral character, of purely external religiosity with corrupted minds and a counterfeit faith – lovers of self, of money, of pleasure rather than lovers of God and their fellow men.

This is a remarkably accurate portrayal of what we used to call 'the permissive society' that tolerates and even encourages all deviations from Biblical standards of righteousness and truth and whose ethos is creeping into many churches. But Timothy was not to catch this deadly "infection". He was to stand firm against the prevailing fashion.

3. Standing Firm in the Faith (3:10-15)

"You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kind of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra (3 cities in the Roman province of Galatia that Paul visited on his 1st and 2nd missionary journeys – Acts 13:14-14:23). Since Timothy's hometown was Lystra, he would have known first-hand of Paul sufferings in that region. Paul continues, ***"The persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted; while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of because you know those from whom you learned it and from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"***.

Paul addresses Timothy as "you" (v. 10 and 14), in the cultural context Timothy faced in Ephesus with its shocking morals and empty show of the religion of the goddess Diana and the spread of false teaching. Timothy was called to be radically different and, if necessary, to stand alone.

Every one of us, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, has been called to be different from the world. J.B. Phillips translates Romans 2:12, ***"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould"***. There are many pressures on us to conform. The pressure is sometimes very intense especially in moral issues due to the pervasive atmosphere of secularism, hedonism and materialism. Sadly, this is sweeping into our evangelical churches in the UK and often we don't realise what is happening. The pressure is greatest on teenagers and those in their 20s. But the Bible calls us not to be swayed – not to be like ***"a reed shaken in the wind"*** feebly bowing down before it from whatever direction it may blow. No, we are to be like a giant rock in the middle of a mountain stream. We are to be steadfast and unmovable. (1 Cor. 15:58)

But first Paul reminds Timothy what he has been doing so far (v. 10), ***"You know all about my teaching"***. Paul exhorts him to continue in the same path, ***"Continue in what you have learned".*** (v. 14) So v. 10-13 describe Timothy's past loyalty to Paul and v. 14-17 urge Timothy to remain loyal in the future. In effect Paul says, "You have followed me faithfully up until now, so continue to do so."

- **A look at the past** (v. 10-13)

Timothy had been given the position of "following" Paul – following him in his travels – walking in his footsteps. We would say of such a person, "He is a follower of 'x' " meaning seeking to follow the person's mind and pattern of decision-making – to understand it and make it his own. Luke says, ***"Since I myself have carefully investigated*** (researched) ***everything from the beginning …."*** Lk. 1:3

This is also what Matthew, Mark and John had done. But here Paul is using the word "following" in a different sense. In 1 Tim. 4:14-15 he says, ***"Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters. Give yourself wholly to them so that everyone may see your progress."*** (1 Tim. 4:14-15)

Timothy grasped the meaning of Paul's teaching and his way of life and made it his own. He believed it, absorbed it and lived it out. He had carefully watched Paul's life and went on to imitate it. Paul had written, ***"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ"*** (1 Cor. 11:1) and ***"You became imitators of us and of the Lord. Inspite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with joy given by the Holy Spirit".*** (1 Thess. 1:6) So Paul made himself the standard by which truth could be distinguished from falsehood. ***"Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the***

pattern we gave you." (Phil. 3:17) So in belief and in our way of living, as well as our goals in life, we are to follow Paul's example as a servant of the Lord Jesus.

Notice the contrast between this example and many others – those who were lovers of self, of money and of pleasure. So Timothy is given a summary of Paul's teaching. Paul is not boasting. He wants to make the point that what he preaches, he practices and he is prepared to suffer for it. The opposite is true of false teachers who had a soft and easy life and moved with the various cultural tides. Paul lived a consistent life of love, faith and self-control. He had remained steadfast to his principles through great persecution. He had almost reached the end of his journey, knowing that within days he was going to be executed. As he reviews his past, he concludes that he was faithful in the great spiritual battle against all demonic forces.

There is certainly evidence of a good fight – a body emaciated by prayer and fasting – scarred by beating and stoning and pickled by floating in the sea the three times he had been shipwrecked. He had a long prison record for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Paul knew what it meant when he said, ***"Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ".***

What about us? We like to talk about 'the rest of faith' but what about 'the fight of faith'? Both are true. As a Christian leader Paul's passion was to fully preach the Gospel where it was not known. If we follow in his footsteps we won't get out unbloodied, unscarred and unopposed. We will face constant opposition. There will be sweat and tears if we are to be faithful to the fight.

Look at Numbers 32:23, ***"But if you will not do so, you have sinned against the Lord and be sure your sin will find you out!"*** The context is that the People of God were crossing over the River Jordan to go into Palestine. Two tribes – Reuben and Gad – wanted to stay behind on the east bank in the lovely hill country of Gilead. The two tribes were allowed to stay behind, but when all the rest of the people had crossed, the soldiers from both tribes had to bear arms, cross over the Jordan River and fight with the other tribes. If they did not, verse 23 applied.

The principle is clear – no believer/follower of the Lord Jesus has a right to be at peace when his brethren are at war. Most of us would like to settle in the land of peace. We would like to escape the battles and live in comfort. We don't want to endure hardness as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus. We never take up our swords. We never receive "stones" thrown at us nor do we shed any tears. We love victory parades but we don't want any battles! We will only take up our crosses if we have first been anesthetised to all the pain.

But Paul could say he had fought a good fight. Note that this fight was not against people. ***"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this present darkness."*** (Eph. 6:12) Discipleship requires us to be soldiers of the Lord Jesus who are determined to be faithful in the spiritual fight.

Paul says, ***"I was faithful to the finish"***. (4:7) In other words, "I have stayed the course, I have kept my eyes on the goal, I have remained focused and now I am about to cross the finishing line." Earlier he had said, ***"I do not count my life of any value, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus"***. (Acts 20:24)

It is important to notice that the Lord Jesus determines the course. On the Damascus road Paul asked, ***"Lord, what will you have me to do?"*** Each of us needs to ask that question every day. We are not competing with each other. Each of us has his own course.

A story is told of two friends climbing in the Rocky Mountains. They came upon a grizzly bear. One of them quickly opened his bag and replaced his big climbing boots with his running shoes. His friend said, "Surely you don't think you can outrun that bear?" "Oh no!" was the reply. "I just need to outrun you!" But we aren't competing against other believers. We just need to get off the treadmill of arduously going nowhere and let God determine the course of each of our lives.

Paul's experience isn't unique, ***"In fact <u>everyone</u> who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" .*** (v. 12) The reality in this world is that "the godly" will arouse the antagonism of the worldly. It was so for the Lord Jesus and it will be so for us. Unbelievers live 'in the world'. But those of us who are in Christ are not 'in the world' even though we are living on Planet Earth. The solution is not to isolate ourselves from the world to escape persecution. We must learn to be people who are 'in the world' and

'in Christ' simultaneously. Some sort of persecution will become inevitable. Those 'in the world' (Jews and Gentiles) who crucified the Lord Jesus will also hate us as His followers.

There is a second reason why believers will be persecuted by false teachers who are, ***"Evil men and impostors who will go from bad to worse deceiving and being deceived"*** (v. 13). Paul tells us, ***"They will not get very far because … their folly will be clear to everyone."*** (v. 9) The deceivers will be deceived by their own deceptions! Deceit often leads to self-deceit.

- **A look at the future** (v. 14-15)

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures that are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (v. 14-15)

We see that Timothy had been modelling himself on Paul's lifestyle and teaching. This had been confirmed by Timothy's godly lifestyle and the persecutions he had bravely borne. Now Paul encourages Timothy to continue in all he had learned and believed.

In the last almost 2000 years there have been many attempts to come up with a "new theology" that is more 'in tune' with current attitudes. The Lord Jesus said, ***"No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'the old is better' ".*** (Lk. 5:39)

John says, ***"Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God."*** (2 Jn. 9) and ***"See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you will remain in the Son and in the Father".*** (1 Jn. 2:24)

So Timothy must continue in the truth he has firmly believed and not allow anyone to shake him from this ground. Paul now gives two more reasons why he should continue on in what he has learned because he knows from whom he has learned it. The teaching is guaranteed by the teachers – Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (1:5) and Paul himself (3:10-11).

Paul is confident Timothy will continue. He had led him to Christ and laid hands on him to affirm ***"the gift of God"*** that had been given to him. (1:6-7) The Lord Jesus had entrusted the Gospel to Timothy and he had loyally followed the Lord Jesus up to this point. Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him the Old Testament Scriptures and all Paul taught was in complete harmony with the Old Testament promises. Paul frequently made this claim including when he was on trial before King Agrippa. He said to the king, ***"I have had God's help to this very day and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen, that Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to His own people and to the Gentiles."*** (Acts 26:22-23)

4. The Purpose of Scripture (v. 15-17)

Paul says it is ***"profitable"*** because it is inspired by God. Its divine origin explains why it is so effective in our lives. He says to Timothy, ***" … from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus".*** (v. 15)

So the Bible is the **only** "handbook" of salvation. Its purpose is not to teach us science – where we discover a great deal by empirical investigation. But science teaches us nothing about the facts of our salvation. Only God can reveal this to us. In the Bible from Genesis on we read the story of man's creation in the image of God and his fall into sin through disobedience placing him under judgement. But it also tells of God's continuing love for us in spite of our rebellion. Bit by bit, the Old Testament reveals God's eternal plan to save His chosen people by grace, knowing we could never make ourselves perfect. The climax of this plan was the coming of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour from all the consequences of our sin and rebellion. On the Cross the Lord Jesus bore all of man's sin – past, present and future. He was raised from death on Easter day and exalted to heaven. He sent His Holy Spirit to us who believe to be our adviser, our strengthener, our great source of joy and the real author of the New Testament. John Calvin said, "***Scripture contains the perfect rule of a good and happy life.***" He was right!

Why is the Bible so very important? It is a book of salvation through the Lord Jesus. The focus of the whole book is on Him. The Old Testament foretells Him in many ways. The Gospels tell us the story of His birth and life, His words and His works as well as His death and resurrection. Acts describes all the Lord Jesus

continued to do and teach through His chosen apostles – especially from the birth of the church in Jerusalem and how the Gospel travelled to Rome and Paul's witness to the Roman Emperor Nero.

The Epistles show us the full glory of the person and work of the Lord Jesus and apply it to us in our lives as followers and disciples of the Lord Jesus, showing us how we are to live collectively in churches. Revelation gives us another picture of the Lord Jesus sharing the throne of God now and His coming again to complete His salvation and judgement. This complete picture of the Lord Jesus is intended to inspire us in our faith in Him so that by faith in Him we may be saved from eternal destruction.

So all the Bible – both Old and New Testaments – is inspired by God and is profitable for us. (2 Tim. 3:16) It is important to notice that the letters Paul wrote – the Epistles – are Scripture. Paul asks that his letters should be read publicly in Christian meetings alongside Old Testament readings. ***"After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea."*** (Col. 4:16) See also, ***"I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers."*** (1 Thess. 5:27)

Several times Paul claims that he is speaking in the name/with the authority of the Lord Jesus. One example is 2 Cor. 2:17, ***"Unlike so many, we do not peddle the Word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God."***

Again he writes, ***"We thank God continually because, when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe".*** (1 Thess. 2:13)

The apostle Peter clearly regarded Paul's letters as Scripture. He wrote, ***"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do other Scriptures, to their own destruction"***. (2 Pet. 3:15-16)

So Paul believed that all Scripture is inspired by God or more literally is 'God- breathed'. In other words the Bible was 'breathed' into human authors by God to show us the full glory of His person and work and so we could apply it to our lives as followers and disciples of the Lord Jesus. It shows how we are to live in some sense collectively in 'churches' (not in the sense of buildings).

The Book of Revelation gives us a picture of the Lord Jesus now and His coming again to complete His salvation and judgement. This complete picture of the Lord Jesus is intended to inspire in us faith in Him so that **by faith in Him** we may be saved from a lost eternity.

Paul goes on to show that the study of the Bible relates to our beliefs and the way we live. ***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*** (v. 16-17) We have seen that the false teachers completely separate creed (what we believe) and conduct. We must unite them. Paul reminds us that the Bible is essential for teaching and rebuking error. It helps correct our way of life and equips us for every good work. In our lives and teaching, do we hope to overcome error and grow in truth, to overcome evil and grow in holiness? Paul says it is to the Bible that we must turn, ***"So that the man*** (and woman) ***of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*** (v. 17)

Some people in the Old Testament, greatly used by God, have 'the man of God' attached to their names.

- **Moses**: ***"This is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, pronounced on Israel before his death…."*** Deut. 33:1
- **David**: ***" … He also appointed gatekeepers by divisions for the various gates because this is what David, the man of God, had ordered."*** (2 Chron. 8:14)
- **Elijah**: the widow of Zarephath is speaking, ***"She said to Elijah, 'What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?' "***

Paul uses the same title for Timothy, ***"But you, man of God, …"*** (1 Tim. 6:1)

So this title is used in the Bible to refer to people who are called to positions of responsibility in the church, especially those whose task is to teach and refute, to reform and discipline. Such people must study the Scriptures and become, ***"complete for every good work."***

We can see the relevance of 2 Timothy in our pluralistic and permissive society today. We sometimes wonder if the world has gone mad as we see so many rapidly falling standards. Some believers have been almost swept away by the rushing flood of sin, error and foolishness. Other believers have gone into 'hiding' as the best hope of survival and seemingly the only alternative to surrender.

Paul says to Timothy, ***"Stand firm"***. He says the same to us. The pressure to 'go with the flow' is very strong. Paul is saying, "Timothy, you may find yourself alone, but continue in what you believe. You know your Bible and it is 'God-breathed'. It has the power to guide you and strengthen you. There may be difficult times ahead with our culture becoming more and more evil. But the Bible can make you complete. It can equip you for the work God has given to you. Let the Bible make you a man of God. Remain loyal to it and it will lead you into a mature, effective Christian ministry".

5. The Inspiration of the Bible

Sadly, the number of those with the heritage of a Christian home is getting less and less. There is growing ignorance of spiritual things. It is a key duty of the church to be aware that evil men and impostors will increase – deceiving and being deceived.

Of course when Paul referred to the Scriptures he was speaking of the 39 Old Testament books that were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit also inspired the 27 books of the New Testament. Our Bibles today are a collection of 66 books written over a period of 1600 years by 40 different authors. All of these books that make up our Bible are "given by the inspiration of God".

What do we mean when we say the Bible is inspired? We need to have a clear understanding of the term "inspiration of the Bible".

Firstly – 5 things we do not mean:

- It is not the natural inspiration you find in writers, poets, artists, musicians and some of the beautiful works they have created. Theirs is natural talent/inspiration.
- It is not that the Bible is just an inspiring book. Of course it is inspiring but so is Pilgrim's Progress and so are hundreds of other Christian books as well as great hymns and so many paintings.
- It doesn't mean a sort of partial inspiration. Some claim that parts of the Bible are inspired and other parts are not – they are just history. To put it another way, some have claimed that the Bible contains the Word of God. This creates a major problem. Who is qualified to decide which parts are inspired and which are not or on what objective grounds such a choice is made?
- We don't mean some kind of progressive inspiration. Some people like to pick and choose and say that books like Genesis aren't inspired by God and are mostly myth – stories added to over the centuries. So they are not reliable or authoritative. The same people may concede that the Gospels are inspired.
- We don't just mean that there are inspired thoughts in the Bible. Thoughts can only be accurately expressed by a very careful choice and use of words. Inspired thoughts might be imperfectly expressed if the inspiration did not extend to the words as well as the thoughts.

We need to know exactly what we mean and believe when we say that the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation was given to us by God. 2 Tim. 3:16 tells us ***"All Scripture is God-breathed"***. If this is the case, the Bible is absolutely reliable, trustworthy and authoritative. 2 Pet. 1:21 says, ***"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*** This means that the Bible as we have it, in its various translations, when it is free from errors and mistakes of translation, copyists and printers **is** the true Word of God – totally reliable.

Secondly – the Bible is a book of instructions.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16)

So every part of the inspired Bible is adapted to our needs. Four particular ways are mentioned:

- **Teaching**: how we need this! We need to fully understand and apply the great doctrines of the Bible. The only way to do this is to regularly read and study the Bible – not only by ourselves but by attending church and Bible studies. Then we will have a statement of the truth.
- **Reproof**: the Word of God is the means the Holy Spirit uses to reprove us and produce a conviction of sin in our minds and hearts. The Lord Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, ***"When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement".*** (Jn. 16:8) Look at the example of the work of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, ***"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' ".*** (Acts 2:37)
- **Correction**: the Bible shows us where we are in the wrong, but it also shows us how to get back on the right path. ***"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple."*** (Ps. 19:7)
- **Training in righteousness**: the Bible gives us God's standards of holy/right living. The Bible also tells us how we can attain these standards. They are the only "equipment" the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish the will of God in a believer. Here are some New Testament examples:

  Acts 17:11 (in Berea)**:** ***"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."***

  Hebrews 4:2: ***"For we also have had the Gospel preached to us, just as they did, but the message they heard was of no value to them because those who heard did not combine it with faith."***

  Revelation 22:17: ***"The Spirit and the Bride*** (the church) ***say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come. Whoever wishes let him take the free gift of the water of life."***

Thirdly – the Bible accomplishes two great objectives in us:

- It makes us ***"wise for salvation".*** **How does God convey His message of love and grace to sinful man?** ***" … The Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus".*** (v. 15) It is the only book in the world that contains the specific and completely authoritative message of salvation. Here are just four verses out of a great many:

  John 3:16 – ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."***

  Romans 5:8 – ***"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."***

  Revelation 22:17 – ***"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come. Whoever wishes let him take the free gift of the water of life."***

  God's plan and offer of salvation is only made in and through the Bible. So the Bible alone can make us ***"Wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"***. In His discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well near Sychar, the Lord Jesus said, ***"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks".*** (Jn. 4:23)

- It is the instrument God uses to effect our **growth in holiness.** We have seen that ***"All Scripture is God breathed … so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*** How does the Lord Jesus equip us? He does it through the Bible. As we read, study, receive and apply the Word of God into our lives, the Holy Spirit does His great work in our minds, emotions and wills.

  Psalm 119:9 – ***"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word."***

  John 17:17 – ***"Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth."***

  2 Peter 1:4 – ***"He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."***

We are to be the "perfect" People of God. Only the Holy Spirit, through the Bible, can accomplish this in us.

5. Enjoying the Bible

"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight for I bear Your name, O Lord God Almighty." (Jer. 15:16)

If we are to live for the Lord and serve Him effectively, it is essential for the Bible to have its rightful place in our lives. It isn't enough to believe the Bible. It is possible to believe it and neglect it and fail to read or study it. Neither is it enough just to read and study the Bible out of a sense of duty. We must relish our reading of God's Word – enjoy our meditation on its truths and delight in flashes of new understanding the Lord gives us as we reflect on the pages of His Book. A point will come to those who faithfully read their Bibles that it is no longer a duty but a real delight. They really enjoy it!

It would be impossible to mention all the benefits that result from regular systematic Bible reading and study, but here are some encouraging references:

Joshua 1:58 – ***"Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."***

Deut. 11:18-21 – ***"Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads; teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road – when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates, so your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth."***

Psalm 1:1-3 – ***"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the council of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the Lord and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."***

Psalm 9:11 – ***"By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."***

Psalm 119:1-176 – This whole Psalm is a devotion on the Word of God. It shows the author's devotion to the Word of God as the Word of Life. He humbly acknowledges the errant ways of both his heart and his life. He knew the pain, but also the fruits of God's corrective discipline. He had suffered much at the hands of those who arrogantly disregarded God's Word and made Him a target of their hostility and slander. Most verses are addressed to God and the author seeks God's directives for his life – God's promises. The first three verses and the last three verses are a summary of the whole.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 that we have studied.

Some practical suggestions:

- If we are to enjoy the Bible we must know and love the One who is supremely revealed in its pages. As we read the **written Word** we come to know the **Incarnate Word** (Jn. 1:1 and 14). When we come to know Him, He leads us back to the written Word (Lk. 24:27). We can't think of one without the other. The Bible can be enjoyed as literature. Its history is very interesting. There is much thrilling drama and great ethical principles, but in order to enjoy the Bible in the fullest sense, we must know Him ***"whom to know is life eternal"***. (Jn. 17:3) In Lk. 24:32 notice that it is the "burning heart" that makes Bible reading and Bible study such a thrilling experience.
- If we are to enjoy the Bible, we must accept it as it stands and appreciate something of its unique nature. This is no ordinary book! It is true that it is printed and bound in the same way as most other books. But it is God's Word fully and wholly inspired from Genesis to Revelation. This means it is entirely accurate and absolutely authoritative. If we have doubts about the Bible, we won't really enjoy it or have a thirst for it.

  2 Peter 1:21 – ***"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."***

How satisfying it is and what a joy it brings when we accept the whole Bible as God's Word and when we have so many evidences that it is, in fact, the Word of God!

- If we are to enjoy the Bible we must not be too troubled about portions that are hard to understand.

  It is only to be expected that if this book comes to us from an infinite God, we whose minds are finite and limited by time and knowledge won't be able to grasp many of its mysteries. If we could fully understand the whole Bible, surely we would begin to question its divine origin. So don't be troubled or disturbed about some of the apparent discrepancies you may come across.

  "He (Paul) ***writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do other Scriptures, to their own destruction."*** (2 Pet. 3:16)

  In these days of uncertainty in which we live, there is tremendous joy and satisfaction in being able to turn to the Bible where we read again and again, ***"Thus says the Lord…."*** (Mt. 11:25) Because He has spoken, we believe that He has said what He has said and as we seek the help of the Holy Spirit, problems disappear, light is given and His truth shines out!

- If we are to enjoy the Bible we must really read it, study it, search it, mark it and meditate on its truths. We must do this regularly, reverently, perseveringly and methodically.

  Concerning the Bible we must be true "bookworms". We must earnestly study it (2 Tim. 2:15) and search it. (Jn. 5:39) We must compare Scripture with Scripture. (Acts 17:11) We must meditate on Scripture verses. (Ps. 1:2) We must do all of this regularly, like the Bereans. (Acts 17:11)

  Read the Bible day by day with the help of Bible reading notes and study the Bible by books, by topics, by doctrines, by chapters, by characters, and by keywords. Get a good quality Bible. Don't be afraid to mark it. It is good to have a concordance and a Bible dictionary as well as a notebook to write down what you are discovering.

- If we are to enjoy the Bible we must understand something of its formation and structure and become thoroughly familiar with its main contents.

  There are 66 books – 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. These consist of history, narrative, poetry and prophecies in the Old Testament and Gospels, Epistles and Revelation in the New Testament. Learn the order of the books of the Bible so you can quickly find your way about. In your notebook write down some of the great chapters:

Genesis 3 – the Fall	Exodus 3 – the Call of Moses
Genesis 6 – the Flood	Exodus 12 – the Passover etc.

- If we are to enjoy the Bible we must be willing to live in the light of its teaching. Someone has said, *"This book will keep me from sin or sin will keep me from this book"*. But if, after reading God's Word, we don't obey its teaching, we will soon try and avoid reading the Bible and will not enjoy it at all (James 1:18-21). To really enjoy it, we must obey what it says (Jn. 14:15). We must claim its promises (2 Cor. 1:20) and we must pray in our own words its prayers. (James 4:3) As we read and study God's Word we should have the same attitude as those in Acts 9:6 and John 2:5.

- If we are to enjoy the Bible we must always rely on the Holy Spirit, the author of the book, to interpret its truth to us and above all to reveal the Lord Jesus to us.

  How wonderful it is that as we read and study this book, the Author is with us to open our eyes to ***"Behold wondrous things"*** as He reveals them. Look up Psalm 119:18 and frequently re-read the exhortation and the promise in Joshua 1:8.

Chapter 4

This chapter contains some of the last words written by Paul shortly before he was executed. Certainly they are the last words that have survived. He has laboured as an itinerant Apostle/Evangelist/ Church planter for about 30 years.

1. The Charge to Preach the Gospel

"I charge you in the presence of God, preach the Word, be prepared in season and out of season; correct rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction." (v. 2)

Paul was addressing Timothy, his delegate and representative in Ephesus. But this is also applicable today in the sense that all Christian people are called to an evangelistic and/or pastoral ministry in some way or other. We need to think of three aspects of this "charge".

- **The nature of the charge** (v. 2)

"… preach the Word, be prepared in season and out of season; correct rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction." (v. 2)

The message to Timothy is the Word – God's Word – which God had spoken. Timothy knows exactly what Paul means because he has heard Paul preach it many times and now Paul has committed it to him to pass on to others. This Word consists of the Old Testament Scriptures, God-breathed and very profitable, which Timothy had ***"followed", "learned"*** and ***"firmly believed".*** (3:10, 14)

This same charge is laid on us as believers in the Lord Jesus. This is our task in every place and every age. We have no right to invent our own message, but only communicate "the Word" God has spoken and has now committed to believers as a sacred trust.

Timothy is to "preach" this Word – to speak himself what God has spoken. Our responsibility is not just to hear it, believe it and obey what it says. It is not just to guard it from all attempts to falsify it. It is not just to suffer for it and continue in it. Now we must <u>preach it to others</u>. Why? It is the very good news of current and eternal salvation for sinners. So Timothy is to proclaim the Gospel – to lift up his voice without fear or favour and boldly make it known.

Next Paul lists 4 marks that are to characterise Timothy's proclamation:

- **An Urgent Proclamation**

J.B. Phillips translates this, ***"never lose your sense of urgency"***. It is never good to preach listlessly. All good preaching conveys a sense of urgency – the importance of what is being preached. We must realise that for many we are handling the matter of eternal life in heaven or eternal death in hell. We must tell men and women about the judgement of God and tell them of the saving action of God through the death of the Lord Jesus on the Cross and His resurrection together with His summons to repent and believe.

An evangelist/preacher called Richard Baxter in the 17th century said this: **"Whatever you do, let people see you are in good earnest. You cannot breach men's hearts by jesting with them or telling them a funny story. Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures upon a drowsy request of one who seems not to mean what he speaks and not to care much whether anyone responds."**

Urgent preaching must continue ***"in season and out of season"***. The New English Bible puts it this way, ***"Press it home on all occasions, convenient or inconvenient"***. Note that this isn't a call to be insensitive and brash. That would only bring the Gospel (and yourself) into disrepute. We have no liberty to barge uninvited into people's homes or stamp on their corns. Verse 3 speaks of ***"great patience and careful instruction"***. But we must always be ready even if it is inconvenient. This is no warrant for us to be rude, but it is a Biblical appeal against laziness.

- **A Relevant Witness**

As witnesses who tell of our experiences of God in our lives, we are to ***"convince, rebuke and exhort"***. This suggests three different ways of proclaiming. The Bible – especially the Gospels – speaks in different

ways to different people in different situations. We need to remember this and ask the Holy Spirit to help us to be skilful as we share. We must use argument – i.e. correct error – since many have pre-suppositions that are not valid and need to be corrected.

Some people have fallen into sinful habits. They need to be rebuked and perhaps counselled so they can be free from these habits. Others are haunted by fears and worries. They need encouragement. God's Word does all this and much more. So we are to learn how to apply the Gospel relevantly in different situations.

- **An Intelligent Presentation**

We must not merely preach the Word, but teach the Word. We are to preach the Gospel, but later give lots of ethical instruction to believers. There is a difference between preaching the Gospel with our main aim to convince, rebuke and exhort from the Bible and a pastoral ministry to believers in the Lord Jesus.

Timothy must have known this, for he had watched Paul in Ephesus do exactly this. In Acts 20:33-38 Paul is talking to the Ephesian elders. We read in v. 20 and 27, ***"You know I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you, but have taught you publicly and from house-to-house"*** and ***"I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole Word of God"***. Now Timothy must do the same!

So Paul's charge to Timothy is to preach the Word and as he preaches this God-given message he is to be urgent in his approach, relevant in his application, patient in his manner and intelligent in his presentation.

- **The Basis of the Charge** (v. 1, 3-8)

It is apparent from the earlier chapters that Timothy was a fairly diffident young man and the times in which he lived were getting increasingly difficult. So it must have been hard for him to accept Paul's insistence that he must keep preaching the Word. Paul knows this, so he adds incentives. Timothy must keep looking in three directions – to the Lord Jesus the coming Judge and King – to the contemporary scene and to Paul himself a prisoner approaching martyrdom.

- **The Coming Lord Jesus** (v. 1)

Perhaps the strongest incentive to be faithful in our witness is a strong sense of a commission from God. Timothy needs assurance that he is a servant of the Most High God – an ambassador of the Lord Jesus and that Paul's challenge is God's challenge. With this assurance nothing will deflect him from his task.

Paul knows he will die before the return of the Lord Jesus, but he describes us believers as those who long for the appearing of the Lord Jesus. Paul is absolutely sure that when the Lord Jesus returns He will complete His Kingdom and reign. So in our hearts and minds there must be a real expectation of these three great truths concerning the Lord Jesus – His Appearing – the Judgement – the Kingdom.

If this is so, there will be a powerful influence on our lives and the ministry God has called us to. This involves both those who preach and teach the Word and also those who listen to it. Both groups must give an account to the Lord Jesus when He appears.

- **The Contemporary Scene** (v. 3-5)

Before the return of the Lord Jesus there will come dark and difficult days. The situation will deteriorate. Timothy was beginning to experience this! Here we see one particular characteristic of this time, ***"Men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you*** (Timothy) – and by implication us – ***keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."***

So the second basis Paul gives to Timothy and to us for His "charge" is that difficult dark days are coming. What are these times like? One evidence is that people cannot bear the truth. Paul says they, ***"Will not endure sound teaching, but accumulate … teachers to suit their own liking"***. They ***"will turn away from listening to truth and turn aside to myths"***. So they can't stand the truth and they refuse to listen to it. They find teachers to suit the fancies in which they are determined to wander. They suffer from a pathological spiritual condition called ***"itching ears" –*** always looking for spicy bits of information. In fact what they do is block their ears against hearing the truth. They prefer myths. Worse still, they don't listen

carefully and then research to find out if the matter is true. They first decide what they want to be true and then select teachers who oblige by towing their line.

How should Timothy react to this? If people refuse to hear the truth, wouldn't it be wiser for him to keep quiet? Paul came to the opposite conclusion! He called on Timothy to be completely different. He gives him four 'commands':

- ***"Be steady"*** – ***"keep your head"*** in all situations. Because people are unstable in thought and conduct they turn aside to myths. Timothy is to ***"endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist and discharge all the duties of his ministry"***. So many people get "intoxicated" with new heresies and strange truths. We are to keep calm and steady.

- Although people won't listen to sound teaching, Timothy must **keep on teaching** it and **be prepared to endure suffering** on account of the truth that he refuses to compromise. Whenever Biblical truth becomes unpopular we are tempted to mute those elements that give offence.

- Because people are terribly ignorant of the Gospel, Timothy is to ***"do the work of an evangelist"***. An evangelist is anybody who preaches the Gospel and witnesses to the Lord Jesus. The Gospel is not only to be preserved against distortion; it is to be spread abroad.

- All that remains for Paul is to gain the prize which is laid up for him and which will be given to him ***"on that day"***. In the Greek games near Mount Olympus in Greece the "crown" was made of green leaves. The crown that Paul anticipates he calls "the Crown of Righteousness". The Emperor Nero had declared him guilty and had condemned him to death, but soon there will be a wonderful reversal of Nero's verdict when the Lord Jesus, the Righteous Judge, declares him righteous. This same vindication by the Lord Jesus awaits ***"all who have longed for His appearing"*** – i.e. the second coming. ***"Longing for His appearing"*** looks forward to the return of the Lord Jesus. We will be bold in that day.

1 Jn. 2:28 says, ***"And now, dear children, continue in Him so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming."*** Longing for the return of the Lord Jesus is in the heart and mind of every believer. It means that at His first coming we became believers and now we are eagerly awaiting His second coming. Hebrews 9:28 puts it like this, ***"So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him"***.

A few years earlier in his letter to Philemon (v. 9), Paul had described himself as "Paul the aged". He has fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith. His little "boat" is about to set sail. He is eagerly awaiting his crown. These facts are to be a spur to faithfulness for Timothy.

Our God is a God of history. **"God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year."** God buries His workmen, but carries on His work. The Gospel is handed down by each generation to the next. Leaders eventually die and so it is very urgent that the next generation steps up to take their place. Timothy must have been greatly moved by this encouragement from Paul, the old warrior, who had led him to faith in the Lord Jesus. We can't rest for ever on the leadership of the preceding generation. The day comes when we must step into their shoes and take the lead. That time had come for Timothy. It comes to all believers at some time. So in view of the return of the Lord Jesus, the coming judgement of the contemporary world's distaste for the Gospel and the imminent death of Paul, the charge to Timothy was, ***"Preach the Word"***.

- **An illustration of the charge** (v. 9-22)

Paul gives Timothy an illustration of what it means to be charged to preach the Gospel. He quotes a recent example. He had boldly proclaimed the Gospel in court when on trial for his life before Imperial Rome!

Look at the circumstances of this final trial. Paul looks as his past (***"I have fought the good fight"***). He has a great sense of anticipation of the future (***"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown …."***) But Paul is also a man of the same nature as us. Although he has finished his course and is awaiting his crown, he is still a frail human being with human needs. He is in a Roman prison and he expresses his loneliness and

sense of isolation. He has been deserted by his friends (v. 9-13), opposed by Alexander (v. 14-15) and he had no one to support him in his first defence.

- **Deserted by his friends** (v. 9-13 and 19-21)

Paul wasn't entirely friendless. He mentions his overseas friends (v. 19) and sends them his final greetings.

- ✓ **Priscilla and Aquila** who were his fellow workers when he was in Corinth and with whom he stayed. (Acts 18:2; 1 Cor. 16:19)
- ✓ **The household of Onesiphorus** – Onesiphorus was separated from his family who were also probably living in Ephesus. Onesiphorus was in Rome and had visited Paul while he was in prison in Rome. This was about 66-67 A.D.
- ✓ **Erastus** was in Miletus, a seaport on the West Coast of Asia Minor about 50 miles south of Ephesus. His name is also mentioned in Romans 16:23. This Erastus might be the same Erastus who was the city treasurer of Corinth (Rom. 16:23) who was with Timothy when Paul sent both of them into Macedonia. (Acts 19:22)
- ✓ **Trophimus** was from Ephesus and had accompanied Paul on his trip to Jerusalem, but he got ill in Miletus. (Acts 20:1-5, 21:29)
- ✓ Paul also mentions some "believers"/friends who were living in Rome – **Eubulus**, **Prudens**, **Linus** and one lady – **Claudia**. He then mentions ***"all the brothers".***

But Paul, in his cell, feels very cut off and abandoned; exiled from the churches he had founded and unable to see the people he knows and loves. In v. 10 and v. 12 he mentions four of these – Demas, Crescens, Titus and Tychicus. Demas is mentioned because he has left his first love. The other three are not criticised at all.

- ✓ **Demas** (v. 10) his desertion was painful for Paul. He had been a fellow worker. He is mentioned in Col. 4:14 and Philemon v. 24. Instead of maintaining his love for the appearing of the Lord Jesus again, he had fallen in love with this present world.
- ✓ **Crescens** went to Galatia. There is no other mention of him in the New Testament. Galatia was in North Asia Minor facing the Black Sea. The people who lived there were Gauls. A population explosion led many people, now called Gauls, to what is now France in the 3rd century B.C. Paul visited Galatia. (Acts 18:23)
- ✓ **Titus** must have finished his task in Crete and travelled to Dalmatia on the eastern side of the Adriatic coast.
- ✓ **Tychicus** – Paul said ***"I have sent him to Ephesus"*** .(v. 12) Twice he is described as ***"a beloved brother and faithful minister … In the Lord"***. (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-8; Titus 3:12) Apparently it was Tychicus who was entrusted with this last of all Paul's letters to Timothy still in Ephesus.

Paul says, ***"Luke alone is with me"***. Luke is called ***"the beloved physician"*** in Col. 4:14. Apart from Luke's occasional visits Paul was alone in prison. He asks the three things:

i. Companions – people to keep him company

"Get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry." Mark had deserted Paul on his first missionary journey with Barnabas (Acts 12:25; 13:13; 15:38-39). But later on their relationship had been restored (Col. 4:10; Philemon 24; 1 Pet. 5:13). Now he was being very useful in serving Paul.

Timothy – Paul longs to see him, ***"Do your best to come to me quickly"*** v. 9 and ***"Do your best to get here before winter"***. The weather in the Mediterranean deteriorated in winter for relatively small sailing ships. Lack of sun made navigation difficult. Paul was longing for the second coming of the Lord Jesus (v. 8), but he also longs for the coming of Timothy. Human friendship is God's loving provision for mankind. God Himself said, ***"It is not good that man should be alone"***. (Gen. 2:18)

ii. A warm cloak (v. 13)

This was probably a garment of heavy woollen material, circular in shape with a hole in the middle for the head. He needed the extra warmth the cloak would give him in the winter. We don't know who Carpus was or why the cloak was left with him in Troas.

iii. Books and parchments (v. 13)

Books were usually made of papyrus and came in roles as official documents like Paul's certificate of Roman citizenship. The parchments were usually bound into books. Perhaps Paul's Old Testament came in this form.

These were Paul's conscious needs. Of his first defence in court he says, ***"The Lord stood by me and gave me strength."*** (v. 17) So help came from the Lord directly, but it also came indirectly from companions, clothes, books etc. He admits he has needs. When we are lonely we need friends, when we are cold we need warm clothes and when we are bored we need books. We must not deny our humanity or our frailty.

- **People who opposed Paul at his trial** (v. 14-15)

Alexander the coppersmith – he worked in bronze. Alexander was a common name in the Greek-speaking Roman world. Nor do we know what "the great harm" was that he had done to Paul. There is no vindictiveness in Paul's statement, ***"the Lord will repay him for what he has done"***. Then he gives a warning to Timothy, ***"You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message"***.

- **Paul was unsupported at his trial** (v. 16-18)

The "first defence" is his first hearing – a preliminary investigation that preceded the formal trial. Roman Law would have allowed him to employ an advocate and call witnesses, but sadly, among all the Christians in Rome at that time, there was no one who would stand by his side in court either to speak on his behalf or to advise him how to answer the questions and accusations made or even to demonstrate sympathy.

We are not told what charges were laid against him. But we do know the kind of allegations that were made against Christians in that period. They were accused of:

- **atheism** because they refused to worship idols and any sort of Emperor worship
- **cannibalism** because they spoke of eating the body of the Lord Jesus and drinking his blood
- **a general hatred of the human race** because they had renounced the popular pleasures of sin
- **disloyalty to Caesar** because they had another "King"

Perhaps some of these charges were levelled against Paul. Whatever the prosecution's case, Paul had no one to defend him. Like the Lord Jesus, Paul faced his trial alone. In his time of greatest need he could say, ***"All deserted me"***. Mk. 14:50 says of the Lord Jesus, ***"They all forsook Him and fled"***.

I wonder if Paul, like the Lord Jesus, remembered Psalm 22. But just like his Master, Paul knew he wasn't alone. The Lord Jesus knew what was coming, ***"The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered … and will leave Me alone, yet I am not alone for the Father is with Me"***. (Jn. 16:32)

Paul says, ***"The presence of the Lord Jesus stood by me and gave me strength*** (fortified me) ***so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it"***. (v. 17)

"And I was delivered from the lion's mouth". (v. 17) Who is the lion? This has been the subject of much speculation. There are several possibilities such as the Emperor Nero – Satan (as in 1 Pet. 5:8) – Paul's prosecutor – etc. Paul emerges as a New Testament 'Daniel' for whose protection God shut the lion's mouth. Paul confidently says, ***"The Lord will rescue me"*** not from death, but from the evil of cowardice. He will also ***"save me for His Heavenly Kingdom"***. Nero could only dispatch him from his earthly home.

What a superb illustration Paul was giving to Timothy of his charge to ***"Preach the Word"***. He was on trial for his life, deserted by his friends, opposed by his enemies, unsupported by a lawyer or witnesses. Paul probably knew he faced the death penalty. But his overwhelming concern was not for himself but for the

Lord Jesus – to bear witness to Him rather than to plead his own cause. He expressed it this way, ***"The Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the message fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it"***.

We don't know where the trial took place. Perhaps it was in the forum with public access. The population of Rome at the time was representative of most of the known world. Paul preached "Christ" – the Saviour of the world. In this environment Paul proclaimed the coming of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. What a shining example he set in that imperial court at a moment of great personal loneliness and peril.

The Conclusion

Paul could say, ***"I have finished the course"***. Don't let Satan deflect you from your God-given course. His tactic is not to turn you back, but just to deflect you so you do good things without doing the best. How can we finish well? ***"Run the race looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith".*** (Heb. 12:1-2) Keep your eyes on the Lord Jesus and not on the church or other people. Keep your eyes on the goal.

"Finished" is a great word! It is the word the Lord Jesus used on the Cross just before He died. He died in our place and paid the penalty for our sins. He completely disarmed all the demonic forces. This is why nothing stopped Paul! Putting him in a Philippian jail led to a revival at midnight. Putting him in a Roman Jail enabled him to win a runaway slave to the Lord and he filled Caesar's palace with believers.

Paul is like a cork! He has a buoyant spirit. He is ready to go. For a long time he had wanted to go, but was willing to stay on earth if he was needed for pioneering into new situations with the Gospel. He didn't see himself as a citizen of the earth. He saw himself with a 'transit visa' on earth. We must be able to say with Paul, *'I have been faithful to the fight I have been faithful to the faith and I have been faithful to the finish'*.

Paul's conviction was that God had spoken by His prophets and apostles and this revelation – the faith – the truth – the Word – the Gospel – the sound teaching had been committed to all believers (collectively called the church) as a "sacred deposit". Paul has had 30 years of active preaching and teaching. He is now close to death. He is on the point of being "sacrificed". He imagines the gleaming steel coming down on his neck. He longs that Timothy will step into his shoes and carry on where he has had to stop and pass on the commission to preach to others.

Paul knew how difficult it was going to be for Timothy. He was inexperienced and perhaps a bit shy. The opposition was strong and subtle. Satan was bent on taking men (and women) alive and keeping them prisoner. The devil hates the Gospel and uses all his strength and cunning to obstruct its progress. He was now trying to distort the Gospel in some way in the minds and mouths of those seeking to preach it. If that isn't working well, Satan tries to frighten us into silence by persecution or ridicule. Sometimes he makes us so busy defending the Gospel that we don't have time to preach it!

So Paul, knowing "the sacred deposit" (the Gospel) had been entrusted to him and knowing he would very soon become a martyr, seeks to strengthen Timothy. He points out the opposition of the world and the extreme subtlety of Satan and issues to Timothy and to us his fourfold charge relating to the Gospel:

- **Guard it** – it is a priceless treasure
- **Suffer for it** – it is a stumbling block to the proud
- **Continue in it** – it is the truth of God
- **Proclaim it** – it is the Good News of Salvation

Timothy was called to be faithful in his generation. Will we be faithful in our generation? We are urgently needed! We might ask, "Who is sufficient for these things"?

Paul says to Timothy and to us, ***"The Lord be with you and with your spirit. Grace be with you"*** (v. 22). The Lord be with you Timothy as He has been with me in my trial. But when Paul says, ***"grace be with you"*** the 'you' is plural, from which we can infer that it was for the whole church and that includes us today.

In v. 18 we read, ***"To Him be glory for ever and ever Amen"***. What a great way to summarise the life of the apostle Paul. He received grace from the Lord Jesus and he returned all the glory back to the Lord Jesus. In our Christian life and service for the Lord we should desire no other mindset than this.

As Paul faces his execution he looks forward to 3 things and of these he is absolutely certain!

- **A Crown of Righteousness**
- **A Redeemed Company**
- **A Reigning Lord**

As he sees the Lord Jesus we don't know what was said – perhaps something like this, *"Lord, I wasn't rich, I wasn't strong, I wasn't handsome, I wasn't famous. I had a weak body and a poor voice, but from the time You saved me and called me I have been faithful to the fight, faithful to the faith and faithful to the finish."*

Perhaps the Lord Jesus responded, ***"Well done, My good and faithful friend. You have been faithful in a few things. I will make you ruler over many."*** (Lk. 19:17) The Lord Jesus places a crown on Paul's head. Paul says, *"Thank you, Lord Jesus"*. Then he takes it off and places it at the feet of the Lord Jesus saying, *"Lord Jesus, all I did was because of Your love and Your presence. It was Your grace that strengthened me. Please take this as a token of my love and my very great gratitude".*

We are believers – followers of the Lord Jesus. We must give an account to God of the life we are now living. Are we building with wood, hay and stubble or with gold, silver and precious stones? (1 Cor. 3:12) The Lord Jesus has begun a good work in you. Keep going! Don't get side-tracked. Don't let your heart grow cold. Don't get weary in well doing. Keep pressing on. Then one day you will be able to say, *"I was faithful to the fight I was faithful to the faith I was faithful to the finish!"*