

Session 2

GOSPEL FIRST AND ALWAYS

2 Timothy 1:8-18

Memory Verse

¹³ Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

– 2 TIMOTHY 1:13-14, CSB

Gospel First and Always

THEOLOGICAL THEME: The gospel of Jesus Christ is worthy of suffering and guarding. Furthermore, the benefits of the gospel in the life of the believer serve the Christian to help him or her stay faithful to the biblical gospel and to wage war against the false gospel.

? What comes to mind when you think of something that represents future danger?

? Why is it important to respond to threats of future danger before they reach their full potential?

Imagine you found a nest of snake eggs under your house. You probably don't relish the thought of making that discovery. Nor is it enjoyable to consider what course of action you should take. One thing is for sure, however, and that is the fact that you would not be content with the status quo. In other words, no one would walk away from a clutch of serpent's eggs under their home as if it were no big deal and carry on with life as normal.

The problem is that those eggs represent future danger. As eggs, not much harm can come of them, but what they will be in the future could jeopardize the well-being of anyone living in the home. Something must be done about them immediately. This urgency is in part because of the harm that will be caused, but also because once the snakes hatch they become much more difficult to kill. Would you rather be tasked

with killing a full-grown, angry, quick, astute copperhead snake or an egg that contains a baby copperhead snake? Even a child can crush a snake's egg.

Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to crush some metaphorical serpent's eggs that were already hatching. Paul wrote, "As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). The problem with this kind of work is that it is dangerous and taxing. Sometimes you get bitten. There is suffering to be endured and Timothy was enduring, but shakily. By the time Paul wrote Timothy a second time, he was badly bruised and maybe even considering giving up. Paul urged him to keep crushing eggs, guard the flock, and rekindle the gift of God that was in him.

Session Summary

In our passage today, Paul encouraged Timothy by reminding him of the infinite worth of the gospel for which he contended. He exhorted Timothy to follow his own example by explaining that even though he suffered, he remained unashamed of the gospel. Finally, by way of example, Paul gave Timothy living examples of the two roads that stood before him: desertion and faithfulness.

1. A Gospel Worthy of Suffering (2 Tim. 1:8-12)

The centerpiece of Paul's argument was the beauty of the gospel. Remember, Paul wrote to encourage (better yet, plead with) Timothy to remain faithful to his calling to guard and disseminate the faith. But this wasn't a desperate attempt for a father to keep the family business going while a restless son looked to make his own way in the world. No, Paul operated out of a much larger purpose than that. Paul, as a matter of fact, cared nothing about his own legacy or accomplishments. Rather, Paul was preeminently concerned with the cause of Christ, because he was absolutely convinced of the worth and beauty of Christ.

 How did Paul's reminder of the truth of Christ, beginning in verse 9, serve as support for the reason that Timothy should be unashamed of the gospel message he defended?



How did Jesus secure hope for His people? How would that hope in Christ help Timothy (and Christians today) persevere in suffering and persecution?

Paul wrote, “He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (vv. 9-10). In other words, the basis of Paul’s argument was the hope that Timothy had in Christ.

Jesus’ mission on earth wasn’t primarily to feed the hungry, heal the sick, or teach the masses. Jesus came to be an atoning sacrifice for sinners. Jesus’ death at the insistence of the Jews and at the hand of the Romans was not a spoiled end to the incarnation but the exact point of the incarnation. What was the meaning of Jesus’ death? Second Corinthians 5:21 summarizes it like this: “He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” The sin of Christians is reckoned (imputed) to Christ.

Christ’s righteousness is reckoned (imputed) to Christians. The word “imputation” is an accounting term; it means “to apply to one’s account.” In theological terms, we speak of a double imputation that takes place in justification. The sin of Christians was applied to Jesus’ account at the cross, and Jesus’ righteousness is applied to the account of Christians.

Jesus’ work on the cross gave Timothy a secure hope because the hope was gained by Christ’s work alone, not Timothy’s. Had he done something to attain this, surely he could do something to lose it. Jesus was the hope of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And he was Paul and Timothy’s hope. He is your hope today. He is the hope of the nations. Jesus secured salvation for you, your neighbors, co-workers, friends, and all the nations.

Peter gave us insight into the particulars of this hope that has been settled in Christ. First Peter 1:13 says, “Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded

and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” When Peter wrote of the hope that Christians have in Christ, it was directly tied to the unmerited favor that would be shown to them at the revelation of Jesus!

The hope (confident expectation based on God’s promises) that Christians have in Christ is so profound and significant that there is no area in life that it doesn’t touch. It alters all of reality for those who believe. Paul shed light on this radical and breathtaking hope in Colossians 1:21-23, “Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds expressed in your evil actions. But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him—if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard. This gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.”

Reflecting on the secure hope that Christians have in Christ sets the tone for daily living. Some refer to this practice as preaching the gospel to yourself. Christians recall the gospel to remind themselves of the great truths of grace and mercy found there. They take refuge and find safety in Jesus’ sacrifice. They claim the gospel as their great hope. Here, Paul preached the gospel to Timothy to strengthen his faith and resolve.



Application: What are some ways Christians can return to the gospel regularly so that their hearts will stay warm and tender toward the Lord, and their faith will remain strong in times of trial?

2. A Gospel Worthy of Guarding (2 Tim. 1:13-14)

Paul explained to Timothy that he wasn’t supposed to face opposition alone. Timothy was to “guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (v. 14). This is critical, because Christians are weak and in desperate need of help in every area of their lives, especially in remaining faithful to the Lord.

? How does the Holy Spirit enable Christians to guard the good deposit of the gospel? Why are Christians unable to do this in their own strength?

? Why is the deposit of the gospel worth protecting and sharing with others?

The Holy Spirit would give Timothy the power to “guard the good deposit.” This “good deposit” is the testimony about Jesus Christ, the gospel. It is crucial that the true biblical gospel of Jesus Christ be protected from false teaching and attacks. Read 1 John 5:11-12 and John 14:6.

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11-12).

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

The Bible teaches that only those who have been justified by faith through the shed blood of Christ on the cross will spend eternity with God in heaven. The Scriptures clearly explain that Christ is the exclusive way to the Father. This exclusivity should compel Christians to tell others about Jesus. If heaven is so good, and Jesus’ sacrifice is the only means to be reconciled to the Father and united with Him for eternity, then the gospel message should be on the lips of Christians at every opportunity.

The Bible says that all people are born in sin (their very nature is corrupted by sin) and practice sin. No one is righteous and holy before God (Rom. 3). A good definition of sin

is “rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law.”¹

This sin separates mankind from God. Isaiah 59:2 gives a vivid, succinct description of the effect of sin: “But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.”

God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Ex. 34:6). His mercy and grace, however, must be held alongside His justice and holiness. God will not tolerate sin and He will not allow sin to go unpunished. This is why a sacrifice of blood is required for the forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22).

In understanding the gospel, we must be sure to go the whole way in our understanding of the spiritual state of humanity. The Bible doesn't say that we are disadvantaged or crippled in our spiritual ability. Rather, the New Testament makes it clear that we are dead in our sins and trespasses (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13). Not only are we separated from God, but we are unable to gain a position to approach Him on our own.

 Application: Why is it so critical that the true gospel message remain pure and guarded? What is your understanding of the gospel? Do you have faith in the gospel message?

3. An Example of Gospel Living (2 Tim. 1:15-18)

Paul gave form to his argument by describing two contrasting scenarios.

 How did Paul contrast the people he described in these verses?



Share about a time you experienced support from other Christians in your life?

In verse 15, Paul implicated a group that he called deserters, and even named two of them (Phygelus and Hermogenes). These are people who did not properly value Christ and cherish the gospel. They were ashamed of Christ and Paul and his chains, so they deserted him. We do not know the exact circumstances of these people. We do not know what their final spiritual state was. We do know, however, that when the going got tough, they got out of town.

In contrast to the deserters, Paul recounted that Onesiphorus was faithful. Paul said about him: “he often refreshed me,” he “was not ashamed of my chains,” “he diligently searched for me and found me,” and “he ministered at Ephesus.” What a resumé!

Paul gave a concrete contrast between people who treasure Jesus and people who have the things of this world as their treasure. The fundamental difference is this: Those who treasure Christ persevere when things get difficult because of their relationship with Him.



Application/Self-reflection: Which kind of person are you? Are you more like Onesiphorus or Phygelus? How does your life give evidence of this?

Conclusion

Paul cared for Timothy deeply. Timothy was like a son to him and had been a faithful partner in the ministry for many years. At the time of this letter, Paul was in prison and was concerned with Timothy’s ministerial stamina as he faced great difficulties in Ephesus. Timothy was in the heat of the battle, and it is quite possible that his strength and resolve were waning. Paul’s aim in this passage was to move Timothy from a posture of fearful shame to joyful suffering as he

fulfilled his role as a shepherd of the flock in Ephesus, contending for the faith and battling against false teachers.

The primary way that Paul did this was by holding before Timothy the infinite worth of Christ and the power of the gospel. Paul knew that if Timothy's attention could be turned toward the reality of salvation in Christ Jesus through His death and resurrection, then all suffering for the sake of the gospel would seem like a momentary and light affliction producing for him an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. Then he would not focus on what was seen, but on what was unseen (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

 Reflecting on the truths of today's study, why is the gospel worth guarding at a great cost? What makes this message so valuable? What happens if it is compromised?

 How can you support and encourage others in our group as they face attacks on the gospel message and their personal faithfulness to it?

 This week who are you praying for personally that would become a Christ-follower?

CHRIST CONNECTION: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners from the penalty and condemnation that they deserve. This gospel is so important and valuable that it is worth enduring suffering in order to make sure that it remains uncompromised.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Christians should be diligent and concerned about telling the gospel message to all people, but they should be equally concerned about helping those who have turned to Christ be established in the Scriptures in order that they might remain faithful, grow in godliness, and persevere until the end.



FOR NEXT WEEK

Gospel Strength

Main Passages

- 2 Timothy 2:1-13

Session Outline

1. The Call to Effective Service (2 Tim. 2:1-2)
2. The Price of Effective Service (2 Tim. 2:3-7)
3. The Impetus of Effective Service (2 Tim. 2:8-13)

Memorize

¹³ Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

- 2 Timothy 1:13-14, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - 2 Timothy 1:8-12
- Tuesday - 2 Timothy 1:13-18
- Wednesday - 1 Peter 2:9
- Thursday - 1 Peter 1:10
- Friday - Ephesians 4:1-3
- Saturday - Revelation 2:10

References

¹Hansen, Collin. *The New City Catechism Devotional: Gods Truth for Our Hearts and Minds*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017.