

God's word in 2 Timothy Believing God's word, ch.1:13

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NKJV Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

If you were to tell a friend or colleague that you used the Bible as a guide for the way that you lived your life, I suppose there's a chance you'd get some puzzled looks, though perhaps they would try to hide them behind a polite smile. But it's possible you'd provoke a stronger reaction. Many people would think you were strange for making such a choice. Some would even say that you were dangerous. After all, why would you base your decisions on a book in which even the most recent parts are almost 2000 years old!

Many people today feel that the values and teachings contained in the Bible are outdated and should have no place in our society today. At best, if people want to "do religion" it should be an entirely personal thing, practised in the privacy of their own homes. Modern culture holds that faith, and particularly Christian faith, should certainly not influence how we think about current issues of the day, or our attitude to work, or family, or any other sphere of life.

It's worth pushing back on that kind of view a little. Anyone who argues that people shouldn't use the Bible as a guide for life must acknowledge that they will base their values and decisions on something else. How are they sure that these alternative sources of values and guidance are better? Are they really sure that the whims and trends of our current day are definitely better than those of previous generations, which were based on Christian values? Are we sure they provide better insight and wisdom about life? It probably won't surprise you to know that I don't think they do.

The Bible is the very best thing that we can use to guide our lives. That's because it's not just a collection of man's wisdom and viewpoints. It's God's word to us. Today we start a series in 2 Timothy. In verse 16 of the third chapter of this second letter that Paul wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy, Paul says that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

According to Paul, when you open your Bible and read it, you're reading God's word. You're reading something that God wants you to know. In fact, you're reading something that God says will be useful to you today, even so many years after it was written. God's word is profitable!

Perhaps you've noticed as you've read through the Bible that each book is different. Different themes crop up which characterise each individual book. 2 Timothy is no different. Often you can trace many different themes in a book, each with their own benefit to us. But over the next few weeks on Truth for Today, we'll trace the importance of God's word through the short letter of 2 Timothy. Today, in chapter 1, we'll see the importance of believing God's word. A key verse is verse 13, where Timothy is told to "hold fast the pattern of sound words."

Timothy was to hold fast and cling onto the truths contained in God's word.

In chapter 2, we'll learn about the importance of understanding God's word. The key verse is verse 15 which reminds us that each believer should be diligent to make sure they are "rightly dividing the word of truth."

Are you making much effort to understand the Bible correctly? In chapter 3, we'll see that it's not just important to understand God's word. We need to be challenged by it. This is revealed in verse 16 which says that the Scriptures are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. So there's another challenge for us today that we'll develop more in a future broadcast. Am I allowing God's word to challenge me? Does what I've read in the Bible today remind me of a need to change something in my life?

Paul ends his second letter to Timothy by reminding him in chapter 4 of the importance of preaching God's word. Three chapters have focused on the need to personally believe and understand and be challenged by God's word. But we don't stop there. The good things God has taught us, we should share with others. Who might the Lord want you to share His word with this week?

So we'll see over the next few weeks that God's word is vitally important to us. We should pause here to make the obvious point that I'm assuming that we're reading God's word. I wonder if there's anyone listening to this message today, and you know that you don't read the Bible much. If you're a believer, can I encourage you to start developing the habit of reading your Bible every day. It's not a rule. There's not a verse in the Bible that says you have to read for a set number of minutes every day. It won't automatically make you more holy. People aren't better Christians if they read the Bible more each day. It's possible to know the Bible extensively but be distant from the Lord, and full of pride. And yet, putting all those caveats aside, do we realise the immensity of the fact that God has chosen to reveal Himself to us, and has preserved in writing what He wants us to know about Himself! If we really appreciate that, we surely will want to learn from Him.

Maybe you say, "I'm too busy to read the Bible." Perhaps some days that might be true. But I think for most of us, most days we find time for scrolling on our phones or engaging in some other hobby or time-wasting activity. I think most of us could probably find some time each day to read a little bit of the Bible. Why not start today with some small amount of the Scriptures instead of a few minutes on Facebook, or online shopping, and see how you go?

Perhaps you'll say, "I just don't like reading, I'm not an intellectual kind of person." Don't let that stop you. There are plenty of Bible Apps you can use that might allow you to listen to the Bible for 5 minutes on your way to work instead of a podcast. How might you make some space in your life today to read the word of God?

Well, let's come to 2 Timothy 1 then. There's lots of things we can learn from this chapter, but I want us to focus on three things today. We're going to learn three lessons about the importance of God's word.

1. Believing God's word empowers me to serve Christ well (verse 1-7).
2. Believing God's word empowers me to suffer for Christ well (verses 8-12).
3. Believing God's word empowers me to stand for Christ well (verses 13-18).

Let's dive into the first section then and read the first 7 verses.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night

and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore, I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

In these verses we get a glimpse of how both Timothy and Paul had believed God's word and how that had an impact on their service for God. Paul starts off the letter by saying that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ, “according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.” I know there's no explicit mention of the Scriptures, but instead of the “promise of life.” But promises are made in words. Otherwise we wouldn't know the content of a promise! Paul had believed God's promise about the eternal life which comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we could say he'd believed the gospel. And this was both the starting point of, and the driving force behind, his service for God as an apostle. An apostle was a specially chosen messenger of God, who was uniquely used in the foundational building of the early church. Paul served God as an apostle because he believed the promises that God had said.

Then in verse 5, we learn that Timothy also had believed God's word. Paul was confident that “genuine faith” dwelt in Timothy. We can see something of the pastoral care in the heart of Paul in these early verses as he described how thankful he was to God for Timothy. One of the main reasons for Paul's thankfulness was the clear evidence that Timothy believed the same things that Paul believed himself. They both had genuine faith in God.

We mustn't miss another important point here. How did Timothy learn about the Lord Jesus and the promise of life that He brings? I think verse 5 suggests that he learnt about the Lord from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. They certainly also had genuine faith. When we get to chapter 3 and verse 15, we learn that Timothy had known the Scriptures since childhood. It's suggestive at least, that Timothy had learnt the gospel from his mum and from his grandmother. I think this shows the vital role that mothers and grandmothers can play in the spiritual lives of their children.

Perhaps there is a mother listening today who is feeling discouraged in parenting as a stay-at-home mum. You might feel somehow less important than some of your peers who are chasing careers and, in your eyes at least, accomplishing so much more than you are. If there is someone feeling like that today, can I encourage you to keep going, and not to belittle the role God has given you for the moment. Keep on using the time you have to teach your children the Scriptures. I wonder if Lois or Eunice ever felt that their time spent teaching Timothy was insignificant and achieving very little? Surely no one reading about Timothy today would think like that? We can all see, with the benefit of the passage of time how useful Timothy was in the establishing of early churches. And that was thanks in large part to Lois and Eunice and their faithfulness in teaching Timothy the Scriptures.

Perhaps there is a mother or a grandmother who feels tired from all the demands of raising children. I know there are so many pressures, and so many pulls on our time. But can I encourage you to be like Lois and Eunice and prioritise teaching the children in your care about the Lord. It will never be wasted time.

So Timothy believed God's word. And in verse 6, Paul gives the consequence. “Therefore...stir up the gift of God which is in you.” Be bold in using the gift of God that is in you. Many people have got the impression about Timothy that he was a naturally timid man, who perhaps was nervous in using the gifts God had given him. But Paul encourages Timothy not to be fearful. Why? Because God hadn't given him a spirit of fear. Instead God had given Timothy the power needed to use his

gift to serve God. God had given Timothy a sense of the love God had for him. God had given Timothy a mind that could think soundly and clearly. Timothy didn't need to be fearful in serving God. He could be bold. When Paul encourages Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" in chapter 4, he didn't need to be afraid when he spoke to people about the Lord. He hadn't been given a spirit of fear but of power and love and of a sound mind.

Well what about us? Perhaps God is challenging some of us today to "stir up the gift of God [that] is in [us]." New Testament passages like Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 state that God gives each believer a gift to be used to edify the church. So what gift has God given you? Are you using it to serve the Lord's people and build up the church? Or is it lying unused and wasted so that God would say to you today "Stir up the gift"?

Maybe you are trying to use your gift to serve the Lord. But you feel scared? Perhaps the person you're trying to act kindly to will spurn your generosity? Maybe the person you're trying to teach the Bible will react badly to some correction you need to give? Maybe your friend will reject you if you share the gospel with them? Fear fills your thoughts as you think about using your gift, whatever it is. So maybe some of us need to hear again today Paul's words – "God has not given us a spirit of fear." Remember, you have a spirit of power – God will not ask you to do something that He does not also give you the power for and the ability to do. Remember you have a spirit of love – God will always remind you that He loves you with an extraordinary kind of love! Remember that you have a sound mind. You can think clearly and remember that if God is for you who can stand against you!

The first seven verses of 2 Timothy 1 show us that believing God's word empowers us to serve God well. Verses 8-12 teach us that believing God's word empowers us to suffer for Christ well. Let's read the verses.

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."

Serving God isn't always easy. Timothy and Paul both knew that. Did you notice Paul mentioned "sufferings for the gospel" in verse 8? He mentions suffering again in verse 12 saying, "For this reason I also suffer these things." But what's striking in these verses is that Paul didn't give up and stop serving God. I sometimes think I might have done. Let's be clear that when Paul spoke about suffering, he wasn't being melodramatic. Sometimes today people speak about suffering if they have to endure just a little bit of discomfort or inconvenience. But read 2 Corinthians 11 if you want to get a glimpse of what Paul was talking about when he talks about suffering for the gospel. Yet still he never faltered. Why? He gives the answer in the verses we've just read. Paul knew whom he had believed! Paul was fully convinced that the Lord Jesus had given him something so great that he could suffer anything because he had it. The Lord Jesus had saved him and called him (verse 9). It wasn't because Paul was anything special. In fact, in his first letter to Timothy, Paul described himself as the chief of sinners. That didn't stop the Lord Jesus from saving him. It was according to God's own purpose and grace. And so it is for any of us who are Christians listening today. The Lord didn't save us because we were good enough. We never could be. Instead we're

saved, and we have the promise of life that Paul mentioned back in verse 1, only because the Lord Jesus has shown us grace. He's given us something we don't deserve!

There's more! Paul was confident that this grace shown to him could never be taken away. Paul had put his trust in the Lord Jesus and was confident that the Lord would keep that until the day when he would be with the Lord forever! And so He does! No matter what Paul could suffer, he knew he belonged to the Lord Jesus. His sins had been forgiven. He had hope of eternal life. He knew the Lord's presence and empowering with him day by day. And so if suffering came as he went about spreading the gospel, he could endure. He could suffer well.

Paul never minimises suffering. He never says, "It's no big deal." And I don't want to either today. Maybe someone is listening today who didn't need to hear the challenge of the first 7 verses. You're active in using the gift God has given you to serve Him. You don't need a reminder to stir up the gift. But you're suffering as you use your gift for God. Really suffering. You're sharing with Paul in the sufferings for the gospel. And it's possible the sufferings are far more than most of us will ever experience. I almost feel unqualified to speak to you today, if that's true. Except for the fact that I'm not sharing my experience but God's word. And God says in the verses we've read, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord."

Dear brother or sister in Christ, if you're suffering in your service for the Lord, don't give up! Don't give in to the temptation to lose confidence in the gospel and become ashamed of the Lord. Remember, like Paul, whom you have believed! Remember how the Lord saved you according to His wonderful grace! Remember what you've committed to Him. Remember the things from His word that you've believed! And suffer well for Him!

We come then to the final verses of the chapter, which show us that believing God's word empowers us to stand for Christ well. Let's read verses 13-18.

"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus."

In these final verses Paul encouraged Timothy to, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words." You see, many people were either giving up on the Christian faith or were changing it by adding bits to it or taking bits away from it. The exact details differ from location to location as you read through the New Testament but for a variety of reasons people were turning their backs on Christianity. Paul urged Timothy not to do the same. He was to remember the sound words that he had learnt. They were the words of Christ Jesus. Timothy was to keep what had been committed to him. I'm sure you're jumping back in your minds to verse 12. Paul was sure that God would keep what had been committed to Him. Now Timothy was responsible for his bit. To keep, by the Holy Spirit, the good thing committed to him. To hold fast the pattern of sound words. To stand firm! Not to turn away.

Paul lists Phygellus and Hermogenes as examples of the many in Asia who had turned away and given up on Christianity. How discouraging that must have been for Paul. It can be equally discouraging for us today when friends turn away from the Lord and stop meeting with the Lord's people. Encouragingly, not all had left Paul. Onesiphorus had stood firm. Not only that but the Lord used him to refresh Paul and to minister to him. It's another evidence of God's kindness to Paul.

Paul was involved in much important service. And there was a risk of discouragement as many turned away and rejected Paul's teaching. But the Lord had someone to encourage Paul. Onesiphorus!

So there were some who stood firm. They believed the sound words they had learnt. And this empowered them to stand firm. As we finish today, what about us? Will we be like Timothy and Onesiphorus and hold fast and stand firm for the Lord Jesus? Will we let the Lord use us to encourage some servant of the Lord this week and refresh them in some way? Or will we be like Phygellus and Hermogenes and be a source of discouragement to the Christians we know?

We've seen today that what we believe matters. We all base our lives on something. We all have some set of values that come from somewhere. Dear Christian, let your values come from God's word. Believe God's word above all else! It will empower you to serve the Lord well, it will empower you to suffer for the Lord well, and it will empower you to stand for the Lord well! May the Lord help us all to believe His word!

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