

1. Introduction to the letter of 2 Timothy

Background (*only look up references together if they are helpful for the group*)

2 Timothy is a letter from the Apostle Paul to Timothy. What do you know about Timothy's background? Discuss.

Timothy was a younger man, had a Christian mother and grandmother, was taught the OT Scriptures from childhood and now had a sincere faith in Jesus (1 Tim 4:12, 2 Tim 1:5, 3:14-15). Timothy was highly regarded by his local church and was recruited by Paul to join him on his missionary journeys (Acts 16:1-5).

What was Paul and Timothy's relationship like? Discuss. Here's some background.

Timothy was a trusted co-worker of Paul. Paul could send Timothy ahead, or leave him behind to carry on the work of the gospel. Paul sent him to refute false teachers as well as strengthen and teach believers in various places such as Corinth (1 Cor 4:17), Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:2) and Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3-4). Timothy appears to have been with Paul when he wrote several letters to the churches (eg Phil 1:1, Col 1:1, Philemon 1), and may even have suffered imprisonment because of the gospel (Heb 13:23).

Read Phil 2:19-22. What else do you learn about Timothy and Paul?

Timothy had a genuine concern for God's people, was valued and loved by Paul ("I have no-one else like him") and their relationship was very close; like a father and a son.

Read the whole letter of 2 Timothy together

Reflections

What are your initial thoughts and reflections about this letter? Discuss.

What are some words that describe the mood of this letter (eg happy, sad, angry, etc)? Why?

What topics does Paul write about? Discuss.

What can you gather about Paul's situation at the time of writing this letter? Discuss.

The letter appears to be written at a dark time in Paul's life. He was chained up in a Roman prison (1:16-17), deserted by many (1:15, 4:16), opposed (4:14-15), endured suffering (2:8-9) and did not expect to live much longer (4:6-7). But Paul has confidence in the Lord and longs for His gospel to be proclaimed!

What can you gather about Timothy's situation? Discuss.

Timothy sounds like he is facing difficult and discouraging situations. False teachers are undermining the gospel (2:16-18), opposing Jesus' followers (4:15) and Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed (1:8). Paul's warnings (3:1-5, 4:3-5) and constant encouragements indicate that discouragement is never far away.

Why do you think Paul wrote this letter? Discuss.

Paul wants to encourage Timothy to stand firm and to continue to promote the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Paul is keen for Timothy to protect and proclaim the message of Jesus Christ so that when Paul died, the true gospel will still be circulating. *If you have time, select one or more of the references and discuss how Paul encourages Timothy, and any instructions he gives to Timothy. How do these words encourage you?*

- 1:6-14;
- 2:1-3 & 2:8-13;
- 4:1-8.

2 Timothy 1:14 is a good summary statement of the letter. What does Paul say, and why?

Paul urges Timothy to guard the "good deposit" (ie the gospel) that was entrusted to him, with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The gospel is incredibly precious and worth protecting, because it is the promise of life (1:1) and the power of God to save, for all who believe.

Throughout these studies, we will discover the ways and means by which Paul wants Timothy (and in turn us) to guard the gospel. Get ready to be instructed, rebuked, corrected, trained and changed! After all, that's what God's Word is for.

Summary: Guard the good deposit that has been entrusted to you – it is incredibly precious.

2. Words of Encouragement (2 Timothy 1:1-7)

Read 2 Timothy 1:1-12

How does Paul describe his position and purpose in v.1?

Paul is an apostle of Christ Jesus. "Apostle" refers to a person who is sent by someone to speak with their authority. As an apostle of Jesus, Paul speaks the message of Jesus with the authority of Jesus. The apostles had the unique role of laying the foundation of God's household (Eph 2:19-20). Paul has been appointed to this role not by men, but by the will of God (Gal 1:11-17). And the purpose of his ministry is to hold out to people the promise of eternal life found in Christ Jesus.

What glimpse do we get of Paul's attitude towards Timothy in v.2?

Paul loves Timothy like a son, and as is evident in the letter, has a deep love and concern for him.

What does Paul pray for, and simultaneously remind Timothy of, in v.2?

Paul prays for, and simultaneously reminds Timothy of, God's grace, mercy and peace that envelopes us and provides for us even in the most difficult of circumstances. Grace for the undeserving, mercy for the helpless, and peace for the restless. They are given jointly by God the Father and the Lord Jesus.

When Paul pens this letter, he is sitting in prison nearing the end of his life. What does Paul affirm about his life in v.3 and what is his attitude like? What example does he set for you?

Paul is able to affirm that he serves God with a clear conscience. Unlike some (eg, Demas in 4:10), Paul can honestly say that he has fought the good fight, finished the race and persevered to the end of his life (Matt 24:10-13). Even now, he still prays constantly and is filled with thankfulness towards God. What a way to end your life – thankful, with a clear conscience before God, and engaged in constant prayer!

What encouragement does Paul give Timothy in vv.3-4?

Although they are apart, Paul constantly remembers Timothy and prays for him. Timothy's tears could have been tears of frustration in ministry, or a sad parting with Paul (perhaps as he is shipped off to Rome), but Paul lets Timothy know the joy his brother brings him and how he longs to see him again. *Do you regularly pray for others? How open are you in sharing your heart with others? (cf. 2 Cor 6:11-13)*

What confidence does Paul express about Timothy in v.5?

Paul affirms his confidence that Timothy has a genuine and sincere faith in the Lord Jesus. Timothy might be young, and perhaps facing difficulties and discouragement, but Paul believed in Timothy, and in Timothy's faith in Christ. How uplifting it can be to hear this from someone in times of doubt! *When was the last time you expressed your confidence in another Christian to encourage them?*

Paul names some important people in shaping Timothy's faith. Who are they? (v.5)

Timothy's mother and grandmother were both Christians, and taught Timothy the Scriptures as a young boy (2 Tim 3:14-15). When we face tough times, it can be helpful to remind ourselves of those who believed in us and took the time to share with us and help us grow in our faith. *Who has been important in helping you grow in your Christian life? Take time this week to thank God for them.*

What is the "gift of God" that Paul speaks about in v.6?

Paul could be referring to a special ministry gift given to Timothy (eg, 1 Tim 4:14). Or, in view of v.7, Paul could be referring to the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us for ministry (in the apostolic period, the Spirit was sometimes given through the laying on of hands – eg, Acts 8:14-17). If the latter, this would imply that Timothy was converted during Paul's first missionary trip.

What encouragement does Paul give Timothy in v.6, and what does he urge Timothy to do?

Paul affirms that Timothy has the gift of God, because it was given to him through Paul. And Paul urges Timothy to fan it into flame. *How can Timothy do this? By putting it to use! Having a gift and exercising it are two different things. How can you fan into flame God's gift and the work of His Spirit in your life? How can you guard against quenching and grieving the Spirit?*

What does v.7 affirm about the Holy Spirit which God has given to us? <discuss>

The Spirit does not give us timidity or fear that makes us shrink in the face of opposition and struggle. Instead, God's Spirit gives us power to serve God and proclaim the gospel (1 Cor 2:4-5). The Spirit also gives us love to willingly serve others, and self-discipline and power to live a godly life (1 Tim 4:7-8, Rom 8:9-11) and persevere in the faith. We need to depend on God's Spirit daily, if we are to avoid the pitfall of discouragement when facing the struggles of life and ministry.

Summary: Encourage each other to persevere in the faith and fan God's gift into flame.

3. Protect the Gospel – it's Precious (2 Timothy 1:8-18)

Revision: *Although Paul was suffering in prison at the end of his life, what was he still doing? (1:3)*
He was still giving thanks to God and praying for others; including Timothy – he was faithful to the end.

What did Paul remind Timothy to do in 1:6? Why?

He reminded Timothy to "fan into flame" the gift of God. He wanted Timothy to be useful in Christ's kingdom; not a smouldering fire but a radiant fire, bringing warmth (blessing) to others through God's gift.

Read 2 Timothy 1:3-18

Consider a precious gem or pearl that is of great worth. How do most people treat it?

They treat it carefully – securely guarding it from thieves, and protecting it from damage.

We have been entrusted with something precious – what is it? (cf. 1:14 and the context of this verse)

We have been entrusted with the gospel. It is of great worth, and we are to guard and protect it.

Before we consider how we are to protect the gospel, Paul reminds Timothy in 1:8-13 about the gospel and how we are to live in the light of it. Firstly, what is the gospel according to vv. 1:8-10?

The gospel is about testifying of our Lord Jesus; who He is and what He has done for us (v.8).

The gospel is about God saving us (rescuing us) from death, and granting us life and immortality (vv.9-10).

The gospel is about God calling us to a holy life – where we live a new life for Him and with Him (v.9).

The gospel is all about grace – it's what God has done for us through Christ; and not what we've done (v.9).

The gospel is God's plan to save us that He purposed for us before the beginning of time (v.9).

In the light of what Paul says about the gospel in 1:9-10, how should we view it?

The gospel is absolutely priceless – it is a "treasure" of great worth from God Himself, and made possible through what Christ has done for us. It is also our only hope for being saved and having eternal life.

Even though the gospel is "good news" or "great news", in our fallen world, what may happen as we share it with others? (1:8)

We may be imprisoned (like Paul), we may suffer persecution, or we may even feel ashamed, as it is not "cool" to share the gospel in most cultures.

Though we can face opposition as we share the gospel, what does Paul encourage Timothy to do?

With the help of God's power, we are to persevere in testifying of our Lord Jesus, despite the opposition. In 1:7 we were reminded that we have been given God's Spirit, who does not cause us to be timid, but to have power to declare the gospel, to have love for sinners, and discipline to press on when things get tough.

Consider what Paul says of himself in 1:11-12. What do we learn here?

Paul's life was wrapped up in the gospel. He preached the gospel to the unconverted, as an apostle he founded churches on the gospel, and he taught Christians the way of Christ according to the gospel. He also enjoyed the fruits of the gospel. He not only believed in Jesus but personally knew Him, and was confident that his soul would be kept because of how secure our salvation is in Christ (John 10:27-30).

It's one thing to believe in Christ; it's another thing to know Christ. Discuss this, as well as how we can grow in knowing Christ more.

Demons believe in Christ, but we are meant to not only believe in Christ, but grow in knowing Christ. We are to experience a personal relationship with Christ. This happens as we read His word and live out His gospel, and spend time praying and directing our life in His way. At the end of the day, it is those who know Christ who will be saved (cf. Matt 7:21 -23, and the phrase "I never knew you").

Considering 1:13-14, how are we to guard and protect the gospel that has been entrusted to us?

We are to maintain the soundness of the gospel. We are not to allow the gospel to be distorted by us or by our culture or by anything. We are to do that with the help of God's Spirit, who is to be our teacher of the gospel through God's Word, and the one who helps us see when the gospel is being distorted.

What do you think of the statement of how the gospel has been "entrusted to you"?

What an honour to be given by God something of great worth. It has led to our own salvation, but we also have the responsibility to maintain its soundness and to pass it onto others accurately.

In 1:15-18, what do we learn about some of the things that happened in Paul's life?

Some deserted Paul as he proclaimed the gospel, but others supported him. We will find the same – only let us be faithful, unashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16).

Summary: The gospel of Jesus is precious – protect and proclaim it, and never be ashamed of it.

4. Persevering in the Gospel (2 Timothy 2:1-13)

Revision: *In 1:8-10, Paul declares some great truths about the gospel. What are they?*

We are saved from death, and have life and immortality through what Christ has done for us; also, our salvation is based on God's purpose and grace, and not on our works.

This precious gospel has been entrusted to us. What are we to do with it? (1:8, 1:13-14)

By the Spirit, we are to proclaim it, even if we have to suffer for it, and are to protect it from alteration.

Read 2 Timothy 1:15-2:13

Not all who have responded to the gospel have persevered in the faith (cf. 1:15, 4:9). <discuss> Paul reminds Timothy of three people who had turned away from him, and not only that, but it seems to imply that they had turned away from the faith. We probably all know of people (perhaps even children) who also have turned away from following Jesus, though they initially believed in Him.

This turning away from the faith was no surprise to Jesus. Read and discuss Mark 4:3-9, 13-20. Jesus taught that there would be those who would turn away because it was too difficult to follow Him in this world (rocky ground hearer), and others would turn away because of the desires and distractions of this world (thorny ground hearer) – eg. of Demas. Such people will not be saved (cf. Matt 24:10-13).

When people fall away, not only do they harm themselves, but they damage the gospel. How? Others tend to dismiss the gospel as a joke. Consider, for example, the public backlash to the Christian faith when a prominent Christian leader turns away from the faith, or falls into sin.

In the light of the reality of any of us falling away, and for the sake of protecting the gospel, what does Paul urge Timothy to do in 2 Tim 2:1? What does Paul mean by this?

He urges Timothy to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"; ie, to be strong in the gospel, for the gospel is indeed about the "grace that is in Christ Jesus". Others may turn away from the gospel, but Paul wants Timothy to grow and persevere in it. It is absolutely important (cf. 1 Tim 4:16).

What else does Paul call Timothy to do in relation to the gospel? (2:2)

Just as the gospel had been entrusted to Timothy (1:14), Paul wanted Timothy to entrust the gospel to others, for the sake of Christ's church. That requires teaching the gospel to others accurately. He was also to pass it on to faithful men, who would be reliable in making sure the gospel was protected and preserved. *Are we following this good instruction? In our homes to our children? In our church?*

The second half of 2 Timothy 2 expands on 2:2, but in vv.3-13, Paul uses three illustrations in regard to how we can remain "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus". What do we learn? (2:3-7)

- Like a soldier - we are to be single-minded; not discouraged by hardship nor distracted by the things around us, but focussed on pleasing our commander Jesus in relation to His gospel.
- Like an athlete – we are to be disciplined in competing fairly; in the gospel we have been called to a holy life (1:9), and so, with the help of the Spirit, we are not only to speak, but also to shine Jesus' life.
- Like a farmer – we are to be a hard-worker; not lazy, but diligent in persevering in the gospel, proclaiming the gospel, and protecting the gospel. It takes effort!

What reward is there for us if we would be a good soldier, athlete and farmer, for Christ?

- As a focussed soldier for Christ, we will please and gain Christ's commendation (cf. Matt 25:21);
- As a disciplined athlete for Christ, we will win the "prize" and great reward (cf. 1 Cor 9:24-27);
- As a hard-working farmer for Christ, we will see a spiritual harvest (cf. Gal 6:9)

How does Paul encourage Timothy not to give up when the going gets tough in 2:8-10.

He firstly reminds Timothy about who we are proclaiming – Jesus is the victor over death, and the one who was the fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Secondly, God's Word (the gospel) will never be contained or curtailed, because God will make sure of it. Thirdly, there will always be people who respond to the gospel, because God has chosen people to respond and be saved. Therefore, don't give up!

Why does Paul end this section with perhaps the words of an ancient hymn or creed? (2:11-13)

Paul wants us to persevere in the gospel, by both encouraging and warning. Firstly, the encouragement - if we die for Christ, we will live with Him, and if we endure, we will reign with Him in glory. Then the warning – if we deny Him (like some of Paul's mates), Jesus will deny us, and if we are faithless, He will be faithful, and that includes bringing judgment upon us. Therefore, persevere. Eternity is at stake.

Summary: Persevere in the gospel; you will ensure salvation for yourself and for others who hear you.

5. Passing on the Gospel (2 Timothy 2:14-26)

Revision: *In 2:1-7, what illustrations are given to help us be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"? We are to be like a single-minded soldier; focussed on Jesus and His gospel. We are to be like a disciplined athlete; disciplined in living out the gospel. We are to be like a hard-working farmer; proclaiming the gospel so that we may see a harvest; ie, people coming to faith in Christ Jesus.*

In 2:8-10, how does Paul encourage Timothy to persevere in the gospel?

He reminds Timothy of the greatness of the One we proclaim through the gospel; of how God's word (the gospel) cannot be bound; and there will be those who will respond to it – even when the going gets tough.

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-26

Consider athletes in a relay race. What is the most crucial thing for them? What can happen?

Passing on the baton is the most crucial thing. Sometimes a team can drop the baton, or be disqualified because of how they didn't pass the baton on according to the rules.

What parallels exist between a relay race and us being entrusted with the gospel? (cf. 2:2)

Like a relay baton, we are to pass on the gospel to others (to faithful men). However, we must make sure that we handle the gospel well; ie, we don't "drop" (or damage) it. We also need to pass on the gospel well - according to the "rules"; as we shall see, that means living a godly life according to the gospel.

Paul gives three illustrations in 2:14-26 in relation to how we are to be in order to do a good job in passing on the gospel to others. What's the 1st illustration found in 2:15?

We are to be like a skilled workman when it comes to the gospel. We are to accurately know and understand the gospel, and how to correctly use it and apply it; ie, don't "drop the baton".

What can we do to be a "skilled workman" of the gospel? <discuss>

We need to regularly read God's word and allow the Spirit to teach and remind us of the gospel, and to help us apply it to our lives with skill and heavenly wisdom.

What two motivating factors should help us in being a "skilled workman" of the gospel? (2:15)

The first is to please God who has entrusted the gospel to us. Secondly it is to save ourselves from being put to shame. This can occur by not passing on the gospel at all (imagine giving an account to God one day), or by not passing it on well and thus, causing Christ's church to be damaged.

In order to be a "good workman", what are we not to do? (2:14-16, 23)

We are not to quarrel about incidental things (such as specific words), nor argue about matters of no consequence (2:23), nor get caught up with things that lead to ungodliness. Just stick to the gospel.

Paul lists two people who are examples of "poor workmen". What's the problem? (2:17-18)

Hymenaeus and Philetus were teaching error – that the resurrection had already taken place. This was the result of them not grasping the gospel, and not allowing it to challenge their own thinking and teaching.

The error that Paul cites was particularly bad. What was the danger of it? <discuss>

It caused Christians to think that they had missed out on the resurrection, and to no longer live for the hope before them. It also had the danger of destroying, or unsettling, the faith of some.

What encouragement does Paul give Timothy in the light of this error? (2:19)

There are those who don't correctly handle the gospel, and who jolt the faith of some, but we are to be comforted by the fact that the Lord knows who are His, and we do too; through holy living (Heb 12:14).

What is Paul's 2nd illustration in regard to how we are to be to pass on the gospel? (2:20-21)

We're not to be like others in the world (that are likened to plain vessels), but we are to be a noble vessel by being clean from sin, being holy to the Lord, so that God can use us for His noble purposes (this includes passing on the gospel and doing good works for His glory). Thus, we are called to be a holy vessel.

In 2:22-23 we have some specific instructions as to how we can be a holy vessel. What are they?

We are to flee evil, pursue godliness, and not get caught up with things that don't promote the gospel.

What is the 3rd illustration Paul gives us in relation to passing on the gospel? (2:24-26)

We are to be a servant of the Lord, and like our Lord, this means passing on the gospel in humility and gentleness. We are to be peaceful; not quarrelsome. We are to be kind; not resentful.

As the Lord's servant, proclaiming His gospel, what should our heart's desire be for a non-Christian?

With compassion, we are to desire that they repent of their sins, be set free from the devil, through the gospel.

Summary: Pass on the gospel well; be a skilled workman, a holy vessel, and a humble servant.

6. Difficulties when Passing on the Gospel (2 Timothy 3:1-9)

Revision: *In 2:14-26, Paul gives three pictures in regard to how we are to be when it comes to passing on the gospel to others. The first is being a "workman". What did Paul mean by this? (2:15)*

Like a workman with his tools, we are to know the gospel, and use and apply it correctly.

In 2:20-22, Paul gives us another picture. What are we to be like? What does this mean?

We are to be a noble vessel that God can use to proclaim His gospel to others. This requires holiness.

The third picture is given in 2:24-26. What is it? What are we to be like?

We are to be a good servant of Christ— like our Master we are to be humble, gentle, peaceful and kind.

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-17

After encouraging Timothy to be a skilled workman, a holy vessel, and a humble servant in relation to passing on the gospel to others, what does Paul remind Timothy about in 3:1?

Paul mentions that there will be terrible and difficult times when it comes to living for Christ and sharing His gospel, due to the ungodly way people live.

What does Paul mean by the "last days"? Does this apply to Timothy's time or our time only?

We often consider the "last days" to be the period of time just before Christ's return – but consider Acts 2:17, Heb 1:1-2, 1 John 2:18. The "last days" is from Christ's first coming to save us, to Christ's second coming at the end of the age. It covers our time, as well as Timothy's time; that's why Paul urged Timothy in 3:5 (and not just "us" in the future) to avoid people who lived according to 3:2-5.

Who do you think the "people" are whom Paul is referring to in 3:2-5? Consider 3:6-7.

Often we can assume that Paul is referring to the people of the world. But if that's the case, how are we to live out the words "have nothing to do with them" (v.5b)? According to context (cf. 2:16-18 & 3:6-7), it appears that Paul is actually referring to false teachers. They are dangerous and damaging. That's why we are not to associate with them; but we are to associate with people of the world (cf. 1 Cor 5:9-11).

3:2-4 does describe false teachers, but it also describes those who live without Christ. What do you think of these words in relation to our own society? <discuss>

It accurately describes our own society. As we move away from our Christian heritage, and away from the gospel, we are becoming more ungodly – we are fulfilling these very words.

The word "love" is mentioned several times in 3:2-4. What will people love, and not love?

They will love themselves – including money and pleasure, because of how these benefit them. They will not be lovers of God, nor lovers of the good, nor will they love others; but only themselves.

Besides being lovers of themselves, what other things will characterise their lives?

They will be proud and arrogant, abusive and disrespectful, ungrateful and unholy, unforgiving and rash, brutal and treacherous, etc. Such is the fruit of the sinful nature when it goes unchecked (cf. Gal 5:19-21).

Christians are to be very different to what is mentioned in 3:2-4. Consider 1:9, 2:20-22, 2:24-25.

We have been saved and called to a holy life (1:9), we are to cleanse ourselves from sin and to be a holy vessel, and as the Lord's servant, our life is to be characterised by humility, kindness and gentleness.

Consider 3:5. What does Paul mean by "having a form of godliness but denying its power"?

False teachers (like Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2:17-18) may appear godly, but it's just a façade. Because they have not embraced the gospel of Christ, they know nothing of the transforming power of Christ and the re-birth of the Spirit. Thus, they are but worldly, living under the sinful nature, with the cover of religion. Consider: modern-day spirituality is the same – people may have a "form of godliness" but they are still carnal and worldly without Jesus, and bear the characteristics that we read of in 3:2-4.

Considering these false teachers, what do you make of their behaviour in 3:6-7?

As 3:5 declares, they only have a "form of godliness", and no real godliness. They are "sharks" driven by greed and desire, and who destroy the lives of others; even those who are weak and vulnerable.

Who are Jannes and Jambres, and why does Paul mention them in 3:8-9?

They are thought to be the two Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses in Exodus 7:10-13. Like Moses found, we will also face opposition as we seek to declare the truth to those about us. But be encouraged. The hypocrisy of false teachers will become evident; so like Moses, just persevere in declaring the truth.

Summary: In our fallen world, it's difficult passing on the gospel; but persevere in shining Christ and sharing Christ so that others might be rescued (cf. 2:25-26).

7. Help with Passing on the Gospel (2 Timothy 3:10-17)

Revision: *In 3:1-5, false teachers, as well as people of our world, are described. What marks them?*

They love themselves; they are proud, disrespectful, ungrateful, unholy, unforgiving, rash and brutal.

What does the phrase "having a form of godliness, but denying its power" (3:5) mean?

It describes people, like false teachers, who aren't born of God's Spirit. They are religion, but unconverted.

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-17

Consider 3:1-5 and 3:10-11. What do you notice Paul doing?

He gives a contrast between himself and false teachers. He was godly; not just having a "form of godliness".

Consider in detail the things that characterised Paul's life in 3:10, compared to the false teachers?

He taught the truth - the truth of the gospel; not heresy. His way of life was holy, in line with the gospel (cf. 1:9). He had a purpose – not pleasure, but to pass on the gospel (1:13). He lived by faith; not desire.

He was patient and loving; not quarrelsome and selfish (2:24-25). He endured – even in the dungeon.

Despite the good and genuine life he lived, what did Paul face? (3:11a)

He experienced persecution and suffering. This began after he became a Christian (Acts 9:22-23), and continued during his missionary journeys (he lists some of the places), and throughout his ministry.

Remember that he was writing this letter to Timothy from a dungeon – he was in chains (1:16).

What truth does Paul conclude with in 3:12?

Persecution wasn't just a reality for Paul, but for every Christian who wanted to live a godly life. Jesus Himself taught that this was to be expected (cf. John 15:18-20, 16:1-4).

Are you persecuted? It does not seem that all Christian in our society are persecuted. Why is this?

There are several reasons. It may be that we are actually not living a "godly life". We are bland and lukewarm; not too different to those about us, because of how we don't follow Christ fully or speak of Him to others. Also, we need to be aware that there are different "seasons". We may be very active for the Lord, but it's a time when Christians are respected, rather than ravaged (cf. Acts 2:46-47 and Acts 8:1).

Consider 2 Timothy 3 overall. Who does most of the persecuting? What happens to them? (v.13)

Our strongest persecutors are generally false teachers; just like it was the false prophets who gave the true prophets a hard time. They are evil men (cf. 3:6-7) who do not want to be exposed; they are imposters who seek to deceive others. They go from bad to worse, but they only deceive themselves.

In contrast to false teachers, what does Paul say to Timothy in 3:14?

He encourages Timothy not to be like the false teachers, who were into deception, but to continue in the truth. The truth is what matters. It will keep us from being deceived and from being fleshly and carnal.

It's one thing to grow in the knowledge of the truth. What else must we do? What can help this?

We need to become convinced (firmly persuaded) of the truth. This takes time as we faithfully read and study God's Word. It is also helped when we have godly examples (like Paul) around us, whose lives show the reality of Jesus and His gospel. May we be an example to others – not a hindrance.

In 3:15, we learn a little of Timothy's background. What was it?

Timothy was blessed to have a Christian mother and grandmother (1:5). From a young age, they taught Timothy God's truth. Consider how Paul describes God's Word – the sacred writings; they are special.

What is the primary reason for God's Word, and why we are to teach it to our children and others?

The primary reason is not so that our children and others become moral, but that they may be saved through faith in our Lord Jesus. God's desire is that we be made right with Him through faith in Christ.

2 Timothy 3:16 is a well known verse. What important truth is mentioned here?

The Scriptures (the Bible) is God-breathed (ie, inspired). By His Spirit, God has enabled men to write His truth (cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21). It's not just the ideas and ramblings of ancient men; but from God. Wow!

What does 3:16-17 declare about the purpose of the Bible?

Although the Bible primarily reveals God to us and leads us to salvation in Christ, it also has another major role for the Christian. The Bible helps us to know how to live a life pleasing to God. Through teaching and training, correction and challenge, the Bible equips us to do good works for God's praise (cf. Matt 5:16; Eph 2:10); and it's from this base that we are then called to pass on the gospel to others.

Summary: **Through the Bible and the godly example of others, let's be helped and encouraged in being holy, in being lovers of God (not of self), and in passing on the truth (the gospel).**

8. Finish Well – Keep Preaching the Gospel (2 Timothy 4:1-8)

Revision: *When we live godly lives (shining and sharing Christ), what will we face? (3:12)*

We will face persecution in its various forms - from being shunned to being put to death (like Paul faced).

What are the primary purposes of God's Word? (3:15-17)

Firstly, God's Word leads us to salvation (being right with God) through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, once we are a Christian, it equips us to live a righteous life full of good works for God's glory.

What is so significant about the Bible (the Scriptures)?

They are God-breathed, or inspired by God. The Bible is God's word to us (cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-22

Paul is about to die. Above all other things, what does he charge Timothy to do? Why? (4:1-2)

He charges Timothy to preach the word (ie, the gospel). This is because it's the most important job of all; for only through the word can we be saved (3:15), and live a life pleasing to the Lord (3:16-17).

Cf. The church is the "pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15), and we are commanded to declare it.

How should the words in 4:1 affect the way we view the charge to "preach the word"?

To "preach the word" is not just a "nice thing to do", but a solemn command that we should take seriously.

Firstly, God is present with us; so then, let us not waste our time on frivolous matters, but use situations to preach the word. Secondly, our king and judge, Christ Jesus, is coming with His kingdom. How shameful it will be if we are found to have failed to fulfil our primary task, which is preach the word.

How was Timothy to preach the word according to 4:2?

Timothy was to preach the word all the time, whether it was popular or not ("in season or out of season"). He was also to use the word, with great patience, to encourage righteousness and to correct error.

Why does Paul give Timothy such a strong charge in 4:1? What was Paul concerned about? (4:3-4)

Paul knew, as he was about to die, that many would turn from the truth. Teachers would come along and lead many astray with their errors (cf. 2:16-18), and hearers would desire to hear what they wanted. Paul knew Timothy would be in for a battle, and so he sought to urge Timothy to continue on preaching the word. We may start well, but it's critical that we finish well; something that Paul will reiterate in 4:6-8.

Consider 4:3-4 and the church's state today. What has been the primary failure of the church?

Generally, we have failed to heed Paul's charge to Timothy. Instead of preaching God's word, the gospel, we have preached another gospel or a compromised gospel. Consider the following popular teachings: annihilation (there is no hell); universalism (all go to heaven); Jesus only died to express His love for us (not to punish sin); Jesus can make you healthy, wealthy and prosperous. All these teachings, and more, have arisen because of what people want to hear, rather than wanting to hear the truth.

In 4:5, Paul again urges Timothy not to be like the false teachers. How was he to be different?

He was to be sober; ie, alert, clear-headed and watchful in relation to keeping error at bay. He was not to be put-off by hardship; even if people hassled him for his stance on the truth. Even if he wasn't a gifted evangelist, he was to still share the gospel with others; and he was to fulfil his ministry (cf. 2:2, 2:14-15).

Paul knew that he was about to die. How does he view what was happening to him? (4:6)

Although his enemies despised his life and would kill him, his life was like a "drink offering"; ie, it wasn't a wasted life, but it was being given to God. Also, it wasn't the end for Paul. He was not being "snuffed out", but *departing*; ie, going home to be with the Lord. Consider Phil 1:21 and 2 Cor 5:8.

Paul declares three key things about his life in 4:7. What were they? Why does he mention this?

Firstly, he had fought the good fight: with God's help, he had fought sin, the world, and the devil.

Secondly, he had finished the course: with God's help, he had done what God had called him to do.

Thirdly, he had kept the faith: with God's help, he had been faithful to God and His word.

Paul sets an example, so that Timothy's life might be about these things too, and that he might finish well.

Is the fight, the finish, and the faith what your life's about? What distracts us from this? <discuss>

What encouragement would 4:6-8 be to Timothy, as Paul, his mentor, was about to die?

Timothy would have been encouraged to know that it was worth persevering in preaching the word and passing on the gospel no matter how tough it gets, because our destiny is glory, and one day our righteous judge will reward us. Let us then be faithful, persevering, and showing our love and devotion to Christ.

Summary: Let us ensure that we finish well by persevering in preaching the word – God's gospel.

9. Preach the Gospel – the Lord is our Strength (2 Timothy 4:9-22)

Revision: *What's the most important task we've been given to do? Why is it the most important? (4:1-2)*
We are to speak the word. Only the word leads us to salvation (3:15) and helps us to live right (3:16-17).

What will we face as we seek to speak ("preach") the word? (4:3-4) What are we to do? (4:5)

People will turn from the truth, but we must be alert, persevere, and be faithful in declaring the truth.

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-22

What hardships did Paul experience as he came to the end of his earthly life? (4:9-16)

Paul experienced loneliness. Even during his first trial, no one supported him. He had a fellow worker desert him and turn to the world (Demas), and he experienced harm from Alexander the coppersmith.

In 4:11, Paul tells Timothy to bring Mark. Who is he? What's happened? (cf. Acts 13:13, 15:36-40)

We believe Mark (also known as John) was Barnabas's cousin (Col 4:10), and was the one who deserted Paul on his first missionary trip. Although this upset Paul, here we find that Paul wanted him with him. Isn't it lovely to see that we can change, and that Christian relationships can be restored? [discuss]

In the midst of his hardships, what encouragement does Paul mention? (4:17)

Paul testified that the Lord hadn't deserted him, even if others had, but had stood with him. He is a faithful God, and is true to all His promises (cf. Heb 13:5). Not only that, but the Lord also strengthened Paul so that he could boldly proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles; in particular to those who ruled Rome. God even delivered him from their hands (note: the reference of "lion" stands for the Roman leaders).

What does Paul mean in v.18 when he says "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed"?

It doesn't mean that he believed that he would escape from prison. He knew that he was about to die (4:6). But Paul knew that no harm would come to him until it was time for him to go home to be with the Lord. As the great evangelist Whitefield said "we are immortal until our work on earth is done".

Read 4:19-22. After a few final greetings and instructions, what does Paul conclude with?

Paul reminds Timothy that the Lord would be with his spirit – he would not be alone, even after Paul went home to glory. What a great encouragement that is. Also, Paul invokes upon Timothy a blessing: "grace be with you". God's grace is the most dearest and precious of all His blessings. It is His grace that enabled us to be saved (Eph 2:8), and it is His grace that enables us to endure (2 Cor 12:9).

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout 2 Timothy, Paul has been concerned about one thing in the light of his imminent departure to glory. What has it been? What are we to do about it?

It is the **gospel** – the good news. We have seen how we are to **protect** the gospel, **persevere** in the gospel, **pass on** the gospel, be aware of the hindrances and helps when it comes to declaring the gospel to a fallen world, and we are to finish well by "**preaching** [speaking] the word" (the gospel) to all.

Why was Paul so passionate about the gospel?

His passion for the gospel was because it is the only means by which we can be saved (1:8-9, 2:10, 3:15).

We may think we know the gospel, but would you be able to share it with others? What are the essential truths of the gospel? (cf. 1 Cor 15:1-4; 1 Timothy 1:15, 2:5-6; Rom 1:1-4, 1:16-17)

⇒ Spend time as individuals writing on some paper what you think the gospel is.

⇒ Then share your answer with the group (keep your answer to less than one minute).

The gospel is all about Jesus Christ - who He is and what He has done for us.

- He is God's one and only eternal Son and our King.
- He came to earth to rescue (save) us from sin and death, to bring us back to God, and to give us eternal life. He did that by being punished for our sins when He was crucified on the cross, and by conquering the grave when he rose from the dead.

In the words of the apostle Paul, "we preach Christ crucified [King and Saviour]" (1 Cor 1:23)

NB: As we share the gospel of Christ, the following points should also be expressed:

- God has loved us and shown us grace (undeserved favour) by giving us Jesus to rescue us.
- Our right response is to REPENT (**turn from** our sins), humbly **trust in** Jesus as our RESCUER from sin, and humbly **turn to** Jesus as the RULER of our life (**TURN** and **TRUST**).
- A wrong response to Christ will cause us to remain unforgiven for our sins and to perish in hell.

Summary: **Know the gospel and share it, for God will always be with us to strengthen us.**