

Preoccupying Concerns

by Fred Tomilson

This sermon delves into the life of the Apostle Paul as he writes to Timothy from a prison cell, reflecting on his unwavering faith and dedication to preserving the purity of the gospel despite facing immense challenges and betrayals. Paul's deep concern for the truth of the gospel, his love for the church, and his profound disappointment in those who turned away from him are highlighted. The sermon also emphasizes the transformative power of the gospel, Paul's enduring love for his fellow believers, and the touching story of Onesiphorus, a faithful friend who ministered to Paul in his time of need.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:17, Galatians 1:11, Romans 1:16, 2 Timothy 1:13, 2 Timothy 1:15, 2 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 4:17, 2 Timothy 4:18

Topics: "Faithfulness in Trials", "The Power of Friendship in Ministry"

Description

This sermon delves into the life of the Apostle Paul as he writes to Timothy from a prison cell, reflecting on his unwavering faith and dedication to preserving the purity of the gospel despite facing immense challenges and betrayals. Paul's deep concern for the truth of the gospel, his love for the church, and his profound disappointment in those who turned away from him are highlighted. The sermon also emphasizes the transformative power of the gospel, Paul's enduring love for his fellow believers, and the touching story of Onesiphorus, a faithful friend who ministered to Paul in his time of need.

Transcript

Now if you would like to turn to scripture with me, I'll be looking at some verses in the second epistle of Timothy and You know thinking about this moment and Thinking about The kind of things that we'll probably look at and think about a little this morning I Imagined that as we open our Bibles here as we are now well We're going to enjoy some fellowship with a seasoned man of God and But having said that Let me just point out something that's very very obvious to each one of us and that is That we're not sharing these moments with this seasoned man of God over a morning coffee You know on a veranda of some overlooking some Middle Eastern countryside or something What was sharing fellowship with him in a prison cell? But it's not a prison cell I've been in a number of prison cells, but not because I was being arrested and locked up That's another story But what I do know is the prison cell where this seasoned man of God the Apostle Paul Is where we shall meet with him in these minutes together is an unimaginably repulsive Setting and a Roman a Roman historian wrote about This place where Paul was very likely being held he referred to it as the the mammoth I'm prison and He said it could be called the house of darkness He said it it was evidently dim and it was dank and it was dirty and And he used other words in

his description words like neglect stench Hideous even terrifying in appearance Well imagine I'm stretching an imagination a little further here now, but imagine that with somehow managing to text him And communicate and we've got a question my question to him would be my dear brother What keeps you going? there in that situation and I believe he would answer like this. He would say well and my Bible is open in chapter 4 of 2 Timothy and I'm looking down in verse 17 if you're interested to be with me. He would say well You know in my first defense The Lord stood with me and he strengthened me That by me the preaching might be fully known and that all the Gentiles might hear and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion Now he comes right up to date and The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly Kingdom to whom be glory forever and ever Amen Well, thank you Paul But you know as I find you in this situation And then you're responding in this way, that's just utterly tremendous to find such a positive Victorious expression of trust and faith in God notwithstanding whatever lies ahead for you, but Can I ask another question What what are your Preoccupying thoughts as you spend your time there in that terrible place He's pretty sure I believe this pretty sure he knows what the outcome is going to be of this particular imprisonment So I'd like to know what he's thinking what goes on What's making him tick in This situation what concerns and what preoccupies his mind in that situation? Well, I believe This little epistle will help us I certainly will not exhaust all that we can find here this if we have longer than the minutes we have But I believe what we find him saying and recording in this little epistle to Timothy It's tremendously helpful.

I don't think there'll be any surprises for any of us As I start reading through this epistle I readily discover that The Apostle is concerned that the purity of the truth Should be preserved You know the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ Was uniquely entrusted to this man the message of the gospel Paul will refer to it Writing to the Roman Church as the gospel of God and with various other descriptions I can think of in other letters But we must realize as we approach this that He What he knows or what he knew of this gospel He hadn't learned from his parents. You know to put it in a rather different setting. He wasn't raised in a Christian home He had a very remarkable background of beginning certainly, but he wasn't raised in a Christian home and He never went to Sunday school.

I don't know what Sunday school is like today because I've been there for a long time But I do believe I may be right to say this that in many cases Sunday school today is A far cry from the kind of experience I had in Sunday school Even as even as I'm saying these very words right now I'm thinking of a man called Bill Buckley long gone into the presence of the Lord I was a young young boy at this point in time But even now these dear me many many decades later I can still hear Bill Buckley with us a group of boys around him I was one of them as he was teaching us from Psalm 100. It's as clear as that The men that that led the church and assembly that I belong to they believe that the Bible was the inspired inerrant Word of God and They believed that to teach the Bible was the most important thing that could possibly be imparted to a group of young boys I'm not Necessarily sure that things like that are always going on today, but I'm sure they are in places. God knows but The fact of the matter is that the Apostle Paul he hadn't been to some great Gospel crusade and made a response there or something we all know what happened there was that dramatic event on the Damascus Road that completely and permanently transformed him inwardly Transformed his focus and his understanding and from that point God began to speak to him Let's see what he says.

I'm just turning back for a moment in the to the epistle of Galatians and in chapter 1 verse 11 but I certify you brethren that the gospel which was preached of me was not after man For I neither received it of man neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ For you have heard of my Conversation on my

manner of life in times past in the Jews religion how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it and Profited in the Jews religion above many my equals in my own nation Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my father's but when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and Called me by his grace to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the heathen Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me And I went into Arabian returned again unto Damascus And then he goes on you can find the rest of the story in chapter 1 of Galatians But the fact of the matter is That the Apostle Paul was uniquely taught by God and how thankful we are today and There have been precious men and women of God down through the ages who would have said the very same thing how grateful we all have been and continue to be for the inspired and anointed words that he was able to Get down onto paper of some sort and here we have it today, and we know that that the great themes of doctrine that God revealed to him and We could pause for a long time thinking about them as he He learned about the grace of God That is extended to men and women through the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ He teaches in his letters about justification that tremendously important foundational truth The Lord revealed to him the true meaning and significance of the cross itself All of these things so crucial to our understanding and form the very foundations of the of the Christian gospel But you know Paul's grasp of the gospel included Concluded and highlighted features beyond what I've just been referring to they were all built on what I've just talked about and mentioned You know if I can pivot off just for a moment to illustrate something When I first left school We left school at age 15 in those days and my birthday is in August and so before the summer holidays I was 14 when I left school That's why I'm not so bright today, I guess But you know I I got a job in a in a car dealership It was an upmarket car dealership. This is how it all started for me and Every Friday all of us who worked in the in the office. We made our way to the the pay office the accounts office and we go to a little window there and The man behind the desk mr.. Davis is a measure of interest he would look through a little sort of Box he had there, and he would pick out my pay packet as we would call this in those days and But I'm imagining in for the purpose of my illustration that on this particular occasion perhaps it was the first day I went there to pick up my pay and Instead of going to that little box with all the envelopes in it he opened a journal and He's showing this open page to me, and he's pointing to my name And he's pointing to the amount that was my wages for the week And he was done And I'm bewildered because I needed more than to just see Something documented that had been arranged on my behalf.

I was there for the money I needed I needed some money to take home. I needed to give some to my mother and And I needed some to pay off my my bicycle payment Which I had at that time my doors domino bicycle But there you are I needed more than just something Documented and if we think in terms of the the great truths of the justification That's unfolded in Scripture, which is absolutely imperative to my salvation and to yours also But but thank God that Paul understood something that was so so necessary and is so necessary today and sadly I think there are a lot of people who miss it, but he understood that there was a dimension of the Christian gospel which I could hear and and and find faith quickened in my heart to believe and God would do something Dynamic in my in my heart and in my life It was this that caused him to write verses like Romans chapter 1 and verse 16 when he said for I am NOT ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation or unto deliverance to Everyone that believeth to the Jew first and also to the Greek Amen, what a wonderful thing. It is that Paul is not merely teaching, you know And educating people in theology he's presenting a message which is dynamic because of the Holy Spirit and that he understood to be Unveiling and quickening the very Word of God to men and women and thereby Producing this life transformation Paul will teach that this this dynamic power of the of God through the gospel and Will deliver men and women from sins consequences He understood that this

gospel would deliver men and women from sins power He breaks the power of cancelled sin.

He sets the prisoner free He understood that ultimately Believing and responding to this gospel that was committed to him that he was preaching And would actually deliver men and women from sins presence in that ultimate day Hallelujah, he understood that the Holy Spirit of God would would infuse into these true believers life even the life of God and And The result would be that the very Christ of God would be revealed in and through men and women who were once sinners and The Apostle Paul carried this message through the days of his ministry and he carried it as though it was a treasure As a matter of fact just looking back into this epistle of 2nd Timothy if you just let your eye drop down to verse 13 Paul is writing to Timothy let me pause before I read the words Don't forget where I started the Apostle Paul carried this concern It was a great concern to him that the purity of the truth should not become polluted or corrupted in any way He's counting on Timothy here as he writes this letter to him verse 13 of chapter 1 hold fast the form of sound words, that's the gospel At which thou has heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus That good thing that's the gospel Which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. Do you see this? He's referring to to the gospel as sound words And another translation puts that same word like this healing doctrines doctrine teaching that provides a healing for the souls of men and women and Transforms their very lives the lives that they live in verse 14 he calls it that good thing under the translation calls it the good deposit and he's Cautioning Timothy and encouraging him at the same time to hold fast to this You know, you heard it through me. You received the blessing of it in your life Timothy Don't let anything at all ever Be successful in corrupting it Amen Why is Paul so concerned about the purity of this gospel Well simply it was this He he knew Very very well indeed That the very message itself was under attack It was under attack.

It is Currently under attack and the Apostle Paul knew That where Satan himself was unable to eliminate the gospel he was engaging in distorting the message and Nothing has changed on that account. In fact, perhaps it's more glaringly obvious today than it has been for a good many years But Paul understood that In his consciousness that the message was was vulnerable They never had a New Testament like the one I'm looking at as I look down here And they never had that was not yet put together as we have it today And it was being passed on by word of mouth and the very letters He was writing would form part of the inspired Word of God in the days ahead, but he had no idea about that, of course How could he? But it needed to be passed on from one to another and hence Paul is looking toward Timothy at this particular moment in this in this important moment in his own life He knew that the only way he would come out of that dreadful cell where he was would be to be led by the executioner So much depended on Timothy So far as the gospel was concerned. Let me just move on with a different view here concerning this Conversation I'm having with Paul.

I think he would Demonstrate through his letter here that he was concerned about his beloved brethren his friends everywhere He had a special relationship with Timothy But then he had a same kind of relationship with Titus and he had similar relationships with so many You know in the world in which we live I don't think anyone will challenge me on this friendship Just friendship in the world is one of humanity's great blessings Where it is shown and exchanged and so on but you know within the family of God Within Within the church a long time ago. I wrote a little leaflet. I can't remember the exact title, but I was I was distinguishing Contrast or at least a difference between what is the church and what is the churches And That's tempting to talk about rather more than I want to right now but there is a distinction between just a group of people who meet in a church in an assembly and the true Church of God those who've entered in to the fullness of the blessing which is in Christ and so on and You know the word translated for us into

The word fellowship is the word koinonia many of you will know that and There are a couple of occasions where it's translate translated differently and one of those are the translations is Communion we find the word communion because that's really what fellowship is It's it's a common union and within the true Church of Jesus Christ Those members enjoy a common union which is far more than just Getting along or sharing some particular interests that other people seem to have in the same way as we do but it refers to it refers to a unique bond it refers to a union as a matter of fact and the reason for this Being shared is because we all are baptized into the one spirit We drink of the one spirit.

We have the same spirit the Spirit of God Within us that then is the basis of true fellowship. This is be it includes friendship The greater always includes the lesser it includes friendship that we know in the world, but it's bigger than that It's from far bigger. It's something so real and Not everyone who names the name of Christ Experiences it but it is at the end of the day the day the normal experience for true Christian men and Christian women and and Paul Paul knew that he talked about it in a variety of different ways in his letters and You know Paul who was once the the persecutor of the church by his own confession Has been so radically transformed that at this point in time.

He cherishes the Church of Jesus He cherishes the Saints as I say that I'm thinking of a young man in the church Fellowship group that I was part of in England many years ago, and I will never forget him saying to me He said Fred I cherish the church Well, praise God for that the Apostle Paul most certainly Cherished the church. He loved the church this was the product of the Christian gospel being worked into and Through the lives of those who were believing it fully and properly and Supremely of course it would be only right to add this that so that Paul Again supremely was a lover of Jesus That was the basis of it all in his heart and the Holy Spirit of God had shed abroad The love of God in his heart as he does in all true believers. He had the same spirit he had the same love of God in his own heart and And Paul Supremely a lover of Jesus, but he was also a great lover of the people of God and To him the the people of God the people in the churches That he knew that he fellowshiped with and taught They to him they were not merely the congregants You Know the congregants who was supplying the dollars for him to have and live like a CEO in an extravagant lifestyle That's how I see so much today But no, these were men and women in many cases that had been born through born of God, but through his own prayer and Perseverance and his love and ministry to them.

That's why he would refer to To Timothy as my own dear son Timothy wasn't the only one he referred to like that. He referred to Titus like that for example, just a page or two away, but the He loved he was a lover. This was the gospel to him the man who was a persecutor of the church now is a man of such profound Supernatural Passion for the people he loved can you can I pause there for a moment? There was nothing Isolationist about him.

He's isolated now in this prison, but his heart was so open to people He wanted to be with but one of one of these other passions was one day to go to Rome because he knew in his Thinking Rome is the center of the world and the Rome needs to hear this message And he got there, but not quite the way he expected But but wonderful wonderful things in a very real sense. So many of the people that were his friends What was in a spiritual sense? They were his children and he loved them with the love of God and Because again, you know the word of this Let me just at least add to this a little bit by saying because there was Barnabas there was Russell there was Luke there was Priscilla and Aquila there's There was Lydia there was a paphrodite us there was there was John Mark You know and the elders in Ephesus I'm thinking of just now but you know and then of course to top that if you want you can turn to the 16th chapter of The book of Romans where he writes and you'll see that he lists. I believe it's no less than than

30 30 names and as you read through do read through that list.

It's as though the whole list is just saturated in affection and Appreciation of the Apostle as he writes Wonderful, how easily today someone's called a pastor Hello, I I reject the title Jesus never had a title. He was never pastor Jesus. He was Jesus and I'm just Fred But Paul he's got all these people various friends, they're the people of God how about thinking about Another verse of Scripture.

I'll just read to you from Thessalonians and in chapter chapter 2 If you if you look down, you'll see Paul Saying this verse 7, but we were gentle among you even as a nurse Cherishes her children do you get this? So being affectionately desirous of you We were willing to have imparted unto you Not the gospel of God only but also our own souls Because you were dear unto us And then he goes on For you remember breath and s9 Our labor and travail for laboring night and day because we would not be Chargeable to you or unto any of you we preached unto you the gospel of God And you are witnesses God also how holy and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you and And You know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father does his children Glory to God You remember he writes to the Galatians and he says so much my little children He said of whom I again I am again in labor Until Christ is formed in you do you catch this? This was a man who carried this incredible treasure called the gospel And he preached it, but it wasn't just words There was power in it that created in him this transformation And he saw it repeating That as he preached it to others Amen, you know Just briefly that there's a there's a statement. It's a truism isn't it if you love deeply you're going to get hurt deeply and You know No, no one was more aware of this than the Apostle Paul he knew that he knew about the demonic powers of Darkness he knew about the malicious hatred of people who refused the gospel He he knew about himself and what he had been and how he behaved But there was one thing it seems to me that he felt very deeply and That was the disappointment When it wasn't just the people of the world who hated the gospel and wanted nothing to do with it wasn't the Devil himself and all of his legions working against it. It was the people who had heard the gospel and to various degrees have made their responses to the gospel and I Think I think his his loving heart only And Intensified his vulnerability to these painful disappointments, which he would feel You know if you want to turn back to chapter 4 again in our epistle And you look here.

I'm looking I mean he's talked about Alexander the coppersmith in verse 14 whoever he was But Paul says he did me much evil. I don't know what that evil was and They makes the statement the Lord reward him according to his works And of whom Be thou aware also For he has greatly withstood our words But then he goes on in verse 16 He says at my first answer this was his first defense when he was brought before the judge a long time earlier He says at my first answer. No man stood with me, but all men forsook me Tragedy I just read verse 17 to you a few minutes ago how the Lord stood with him and And that was wonderful, but what a tragedy is this he said You know no one stood with me you know and We could go back to chapter 1 if you want to go there, and I think I'm going to go to I'll just go right to verse 15 this thou knowest he's saying Timothy.

You know this you know this very well That all they which are in Asia Be turned away from me That's why most of his ministry took place all they Which are in Asia turned away from me. Let me just remind you of the circumstances in which this great Seasoned man of God finds himself at this point. He's at the end of the trail as we say he knows that And he's in a horrible horrible horrible circumstance deplorable situation His heart's in faith.

This is amazing. This is the grace of God where in this most extreme moment He's concerned about the gospel he's concerned about his friends. He's concerned for their safety He's concerned that they will Grasp the truths of the gospel that they've heard taught by him and that they continue to present and preach them everywhere But he also carried in his heart somewhere this pain this hurt that people You know that it meant so much to him Had left him and back in the 15th verse again, they've all turned away from me of whom He says phagellus and homogenous Now the point is with those two names their names which are The etched into infamy because they're the names of two deserters These these were evidently men You know, how can I put this these were people They they were also from Ephesus.

I Don't know whether you've read recently in patch chapter 20. I don't have time to read there though I would very much love to do that right now as Paul is about to leave Ephesus. He's with the elders on the seashore and Many of them are falling on his neck.

They Grieve deeply because they've heard him say that you won't see my face anymore And this seems to be such love and yet you will also remember that Paul says some very very Challenging things to them that even from their own company there would be those who would raise that would be raised up or would rise up rather and They would be enemies of the gospel I don't know what it was to felt to hear that said but that there's some reason I can't prove this But there's some reason for me to believe since Paul mentions these two names as he and he says to Timothy You know very well about these people But they could very well have been there when Timothy was also there on that seashore on that occasion And had those things that were said And yet what happened? Was heartbreaking to the Apostle they had received Paul as a man of God They had received his message as the Word of God To one degree or another they'd labored with him In some way or another in some degree or another co-workers But here's the point the cost of integrity Was too great for them You know You know even even for the man who'd led them to the narrow gate And showed to them the narrow way You know very well Paul he says I'm tragic You know I don't want to finish on this note I Want to say this quickly before I finish Although I believe Paul was deeply pained By the fact that so many had left him and walked away Yet, I find not a trace of bitterness in him and that's a wonder and again it refers me to the gospel of grace and You know I won't finish on the negative note Let's just look again chapter 1 here And I'm going to read And I've just been reading to you verse 15 which we referred to these two men by Gellis and homogenies Verse 16 the Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus For he off refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain But when he was in Rome he sought me out very diligently and found me the Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day and In how many things he ministered unto me as Ephesus Thou knowest very well Do you hear that Oh Nessa for us his name means help bringer He was from the Ephesus Church He was well known evidently. I want you to just think about this man Just before I finish off this talk with you this morning or in this session That man in Ephesus possibly an elder He he says goodbye to his family And to the church fellowship there And he walks out from that town that city and he walks into terrible terrible danger The big question for him because his mission was to go and see Paul He wanted to be with Paul. He wanted to encourage Paul He'd ministered to him so faithfully for a long time there in Ephesus as Paul was there Things had changed so dramatically now and he set out to go and find Paul and But where is Paul and I love it in verse in verse 17 that he says but when He wasn't he wasn't ashamed of my chain.

Okay, but when he was in Rome, he got to Rome He sought me out very diligently and he found me see He didn't know where Paul was precisely knew he was being imprisoned somehow or other probably asking questions, which would make him very vulnerable in that city at that time and He gained

information and then it was well, you know, this is only my own mind thing Well, which cell is he and where is he and I love these words. He said he he sought me out very diligent This is the love of God in a man's heart that's prepared to sacrifice everything as Paul had been for him so now he Seeks him out It's only in my imagination. I can't do better than that But I love these words and Paul says he found me He found me somehow or other whether I don't know whether he saw him through a hole in the roof of the cell that some people might suggest or how but But at some point their faces met they saw each other Paul saw this beloved and cherished brother that he felt he owed so much to and This dear man Onesiphorus he saw the Apostle they saw each other I think for Saul for Paul rather in the prison.

It was as though Jesus Christ himself had walked into the cell This leaves me with a few questions Okay, Onesiphorus ministered to Paul for no less than three years. We read He is now having been with Paul having found him he's no longer with him Where is he what I do know is that Paul in this very 16th verse On Chapter 4 and there's 16 But the fact of the matter is Paul is saying and I'm praying for his household He says that again in the fourth chapter He's praying that salute Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus Why would he say that? It's certainly not wrong to say that but why doesn't he make a reference to Onesiphorus? Could it be I don't know Could it be that Onesiphorus never made it home? from that trip The man Paul loved so passionately Perhaps somehow word got back to Paul prior to him writing this to Timothy that he never did get home Paul says remember his family remember his household What what a wonderful thing indeed and the Apostle Paul here you know, he's presented to us such a such a stark contrast between And Phil Gallus and Hermogenes, you know, they turned away from the Apostle in the time of Paul's own need but Onesiphorus he often refreshed Paul he says and and He wasn't ashamed of my chains Hmm Amen He was a faithful bold fearless Christian man was Onesiphorus Well, we must leave the Apostle Paul on this occasion Our last glimpse of him as we leave is not that of a bitter old man nursing his hurts But we're saying goodbye to a true lover of Jesus a Faithful Christian soldier who had fought the good fight and had finished his calling He never lost his grip on the treasure that had been entrusted to him I Imagine Excuse me for using my imagination. I Imagined his eyes were wet as he stepped through that final portal Yes, his heart would have been a burning furnace I Am assured in my heart and in my mind That the hands that embraced him as he went through that final portal Would tenderly wipe away every tear From his eyes and perhaps just whisper into his ear Well done Paul My good and faithful servant Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord Can I just ask if you've found help here tell me I'd love to hear Go to turn to the scriptures with Fred Tomlinson and say something More than that.

I'd love to see you all Come on to our online Sunday morning meeting You can find information about that at the website McKenzie fellowship calm Father we pray that you will use your word for your purpose and your glory and for the blessing of hungry hearts that are ready to devour every precious crumb That a person such as I am able to hand to them. Thank you Lord for for your added blessing that Is so abundantly poured out For men and women such as we in Jesus name. We thank you father

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/iymTdK4CEVE.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/fred-tomilson/preoccupying-concerns/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net

