

# Studies in 2 Timothy-01 2 Timothy-1

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald explores the themes of faith, endurance, and the transformative power of the gospel in 2 Timothy 1.*

**Duration:** 36:36

**Scripture:** Job 19:25, Psalm 6:5, Psalm 17:15, 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, Philippians 1:21, 2 Timothy 1:9-10

**Topics:** "Studies"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the progression of the Christian life using three illustrations: the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. He emphasizes the need for believers to endure hardships and not be entangled in the affairs of this world. The preacher also highlights the importance of every believer being a witnessing Christian and passing on the sacred deposit of faith to others. He concludes by emphasizing the self-denial, sacrifice, and obedience required in the Christian life, comparing it to the self-discipline and rule-following of an athlete striving for victory.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn in our Bibles back to 2nd Timothy, please? 2nd Timothy, chapter 1. And I think, with your permission, we'll just take up where we left off last week. We were speaking about verse 10 of chapter 1 last week. And I'll just read it again.

I'll go back to verse 9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began? Verse 10. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. First we see in verse 10 that the Lord Jesus has abolished death.

It doesn't mean that there is no death, because we see evidences of death all around us in this world. But it means that for the child of God he has annulled the power of death. The believer in Christ no longer lives in abject fear of death.

The Lord Jesus, by his work on the cross, has defanged death, has taken the sting out of death. Death is a conquered foe for the believer in Jesus, and he can realize that death is the messenger of God that brings the soul to heaven. Verse 11.

We would probably appreciate this passage more if we thought for a while of people in heathen, pagan darkness today, whose whole lives are lived in the fear of death, and much of whose religious activities is devoting to ward off the evil power of death. How much we owe to the Lord Jesus, who has annulled death, who has robbed it of its sting, and we can look forward with confidence to the future, knowing that because he lives, we shall live also. Then Paul reminds us that Christ has brought life and immortality, and the word there is really incorruption, he has brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel.

This means that the coming of the Lord Jesus has brought a completely new illumination on the subject of life and incorruption or resurrection. We mentioned last week that Old Testament saints had very dim and indistinct ideas as to what happened at the time of death, and I'd just like to read you some verses from the Old Testament, and then I'll read you some verses from the New Testament, and I think that just in the change from these verses you will get an insight into what is meant by the Lord Jesus bringing life and incorruption to light through the gospel. Here are some verses from the Old Testament, mostly from the Psalms.

Psalms 6, 5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who shall give thee thanks? The psalmist is in a tight place, his enemies are closing in upon him, and his argument with God is, don't let me die. In death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who shall give thee thanks? Psalm 30, 9. What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Psalm 88, 11. Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction? Psalm 115, verse 1. The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.

And one in Isaiah 38, 18. For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee, they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. It's kind of dismal, isn't it? Not very much encouragement there.

Now, let me just say that in the Old Testament, there were also flashes of light. There were also occasional flashes of light on the subject. Job could say, I know that my Redeemer liveth.

Psalmist could say, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness, and thy presence's fullness of joy at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore. But the verses that I read were more characteristic of how the Old Testament saints looked at it. Now listen to the New Testament.

2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 6-8. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Quite a change, isn't it? This breathes confidence and assurance. Philippians chapter 1, verses 21 and 23. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

For I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. So the Apostle Paul had a very different attitude toward death than the Old Testament saints generally did. How thankful those of us who are believers can be today that Christ has brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel.

We owe so much to him. Then in verse 11, referring to the gospel, Paul speaks of himself as having been appointed a preacher, that means a herald, an apostle, that means one divinely commissioned by the risen Christ, and a teacher. And once again, Paul always thinks of the wonderful privilege and exalted dignity of being used by God in the proclamation of his word.

And truly, it is one of the greatest privileges that could be conferred on a human being. For the which cause I am not ashamed. For the which cause I also suffer these things.

Nevertheless, I am not ashamed. Suffer these things. What does Paul mean, suffer these things? He wrote this from prison facing death.

Suffer these things, the dungeon, desolation, darkness, desertion by many of his so-called friends, hatred, and loneliness. And he says, because of the wonderful privilege, because of the wonderful gospel I have been commissioned to preach, I'm willing to suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed.

Verse 12 is undoubtedly the key verse of the first chapter of 2 Timothy, and the one of which we're most familiar, and the one from which we sang already this morning. I know whom I have believed. I like that.

It's often been pointed out that Paul didn't say, I know what I have believed. I know whom I have believed. Consistently throughout the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ is presented as the object of faith.

Not a creed, not a church, not any human being, but the risen, exalted Christ in glory is the one we are told to put our faith and trust in. Paul says, I am not ashamed. I know whom I have believed.

It's very easy for us to be ashamed, isn't it? Very easy for us in our daily life to be ashamed of the Lord Jesus, for the crimson blush to come to our cheeks at times. We're not ashamed of political subjects. We're not ashamed of economic subjects, but it really is disheartening how often we can cringe in fear and shame at the precious name of Jesus.

Paul was not ashamed. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. This is a very interesting verse because it is capable of two meanings.

It actually can mean he is able to keep that which he has committed unto me, or it can mean he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. In the first case, it would refer to the gospel treasure of which Paul was made a steward. In the second case, it would refer to his soul, to Paul's own soul, which he had committed to the Lord.

Another Paul has already told us this morning how he did that, how he committed the keeping of his soul to the Lord, and I think that this will always be the favored interpretation of this verse. He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day, and we have that confidence, too, that he who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Then Paul exhorts Timothy, hold fast the form of sound words.

I told you last week that facing death, soon to pass off the theme, soon to lay down his neck on the block in Rome, the great burden upon the heart of the great Apostle Paul was the preservation of the truth of God, of the ministry of God down through the years. Here he is saying to Timothy, Timothy, I have conveyed to you the outline of sound or helpful words. You hold it fast.

Don't budge. In many ways we live in an age of vacillation. In many ways, even in the evangelical world, people are mealy-mouthed.

They can talk out of both corners of their mouths at the same time. I don't detect any of that in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Here was the truth committed to Timothy.

He's saying hold fast that outline of truth. He didn't profess to have given Timothy all the truth, but he did give him an outline of it. But I think there's something else here.

Hold fast the form of sound words. Not just the truth, but the very expressions that are used to convey that truth. You've probably noticed in some circles in recent years that there's been an effort to downplay expressions like the blood of Christ.

Have you noticed that? In some scholarly and intellectual circles, there's kind of a desire to get around that and substitute life, the word life, for the blood. But the scripture still says the blood of Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. I believe that in this exhortation, Paul is telling Timothy not only to hold on to the outline of sound words, but the very expressions by which that is conveyed.

Some years ago, in fact last year at a conference, the question came up, should we talk about being born again? Is that relevant to people? Are you really conveying truth to people in a way in which they understand it? And there was this subtle desire to get away from the word being born again. Well, it's funny how there's been a great upsurge of the use of the word ever since then. Almost as if the Holy Spirit rebelled against that and said, well, I'll show you how relevant I can make it.

So now we hear it on many people's lips, born again Christians. Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. Faith and love.

Faith is that which is inward. Love is that which is the outward expression. Paul praised God when he wrote to the Ephesians.

He said, since I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love to all the saints, and this is the spirit in which we're to hold fast the form of sound words, and those are inseparably connected with Christ Jesus in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. Once again, you hear the heartbeat of the Apostle Paul in verse 14. He said, that good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

That good thing, well, I believe that it refers to, once again, the sacred deposit of the truth of God. That good thing committed to Timothy and to many others as well. He says, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

And then in the closing verses of this chapter, you have some very poignant words of the Apostle, almost unbelievable in a way, but here they are. This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from thee. Asia here does not mean the continent of Asia.

It does not mean Asia Minor, which would be Turkey today, but it simply means the western province of Asia Minor. And actually, we're not given any details about this, but from the context it would seem that there were believers there in Asia who had become offended by Paul's arrest and imprisonment and who had really, you might say, broken off diplomatic relations with him. It's really sad, isn't it? He doesn't mention all of their names.

He mentions two, Phygelus and Hermogenes. Guy King says, these men couldn't help their ugly names, but they could help their ugly characters. And I think that's true.

They couldn't help having those ugly names, but they could have helped their ugly characters. What an infamous thing. Turn their backs on the Apostle Paul.

Here he is, languishing in a Roman dungeon for the cause of Christ and for the sake of the gospel. And probably we sit here and we'd say, well, I'd never do that. You know, sometimes it's possible for us to be out somewhere and there's some servant of the Lord, maybe one of God's irregulars, and he's out there in the open air preaching the gospel.

What do you do? Do you go up and stand with him and fly your colors? Or do you slink away in the crowd? It's easy to be offended for the name of Christ, because that's what happened here. This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. But in lovely contrast to that, you have this man, Onesiphorus.

And the Apostle Paul says, The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus. Now, when you first read that, give mercy, you think, what did he do wrong? Well, it really doesn't mean mercy in that way. Sometimes we use the word mercy that way, I think Paul used it in his testimony, thanking the Lord for the mercy he had shown.

That means we were guilty and we deserve punishment, and the Lord showed us mercy. But here it's more mercy as a reward. Not mercy for one who has failed, but mercy for one who has stood true to the Lord in this time.

The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus, for he oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain. It seems that Onesiphorus came to Rome and he conducted a very diligent search. I don't suppose it was easy to find the Apostle Paul, was it? I'm sure that the authorities didn't go around publicizing his place of incarceration, but Onesiphorus wasn't satisfied until he found out where Paul was, and he made frequent trips.

And I suppose that put him at the mouth of the cannon, too, didn't it? I mean, fraternizing with a supposed criminal. It didn't make any difference. He came to him and he oft refreshed him, and I don't doubt that that had to do not only with his presence with the Apostle Paul, but bringing him perhaps food and drink and clothing and all the rest, and was not ashamed of my chain.

I like that. 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 at Ephesus thou knowest very well.

Now, he was not only faithful to Paul in Rome, but this was characteristic of his life and ministry in his home in Ephesus. You might be surprised to know that verses 16 and 17 and 18 have been used as justification for prayers for the dead. Now, please look carefully.

Can you see anything in those verses that would justify prayers for the dead? Well, I've been searching them this last week, and I have yet to find that. They say the Lord, they say, but it says the Lord grant mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus, to the family of Onesiphorus, as if he himself had passed off the scene, and it says the Lord grant him mercy in that day. In other words, praying for the dead Onesiphorus.

Well, it's a pure conjecture, and any doctrine that would have to be based on anything as flimsy as that scarcely deserves mention. The rest of scripture is very clear on the subject that the decision we make for or against the Lord Jesus in this life is the decision for all eternity, and there is no scriptural support for praying for the dead. We pray for people while they're still alive.

Pray that they might come to know the Savior, but once a person has died, his doom is sealed, or his blessing is sealed for all eternity. As the tree falleth, so shall it lie. So there is no justification in these verses for prayers for the dead.

Going on to chapter 2, Paul gives some more instructions to Timothy. He first of all tells him to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Be strong in the grace.

Thou, therefore, my son, my child, be strong in the grace. Actually, it's be strengthened in the grace that's in Christ Jesus. Timothy, going forth into the warfare, don't go forth in your own strength.

That will lead to disaster. That will lead to downfall, but that is true. That is true in our Christian lives.

It's possible for us to do things in our own strength and suffer nervous breakdowns and all other types of breakdowns as a result. The great thing is to turn over our lives to the Lord Jesus and let him empower us and let him strengthen us and let him work out his will through us. In one of his books, Hudson Taylor tells a lovely illustration.

It's a chapter called The Exchanged Life. The Exchanged Life tells of a crisis experience of the Holy Spirit which he had one day. He was walking down on the beach.

All of the activities of his missionary work had been weighing heavily upon him. He had been trying to carry on the work in his own strength. This day down on the beach, he realized it wasn't Hudson Taylor at all.

It was the Lord Jesus. He turned his life over to the Lord in a new way in which he had never done before. He allowed the Lord Jesus to work through him.

Instead of his working for God, he allowed God to work through him. He said that from that day there was a new peace and a new rest and a new contentment in his service for the Lord. I think that's what Paul is saying to Timothy here.

Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace. Grace here means all that is needed, all the power and strength and wisdom that's needed to be effective for God. Draw your strength from Christ.

Second, he says, be a reproducing teacher. Be a reproducing teacher. And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.

The Bible doesn't know anything about apostolic succession, but it does teach here the succession of teachers of the word of God. And in this wonderful verse of scripture, you have five generations of teachers, don't you? Five generations. First of all, the apostle Paul, me.

Secondly, Timothy and many witnesses. Thirdly, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. Four, perhaps, did I say five? Things that Paul, Timothy and many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.

Four generations. This is God's will for the propagation of his truth today. God never intended that the work should be done exclusively by a cast of men known as priests or clergy.

God intended every believer to be a witnessing Christian, every believer to be a student of the word of God, every believer to be passing on the sacred deposit to others. And then Paul uses three beautiful illustrations of what Timothy is to be, what it's like in the life. The first is the soldier, the second is the athlete, and the third is the farmer.

The soldier, verses three and four, the athlete, verse five, and the husbandman or farmer, in verse six. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. It means thou therefore take thy share of hardness.

Why did he say that? Because there is that in every one of us, that we hear of other people enduring hardness and we think it's all right for them, but we don't think it would be all right for us. Do you ever feel that way? Seems so natural for other people to go through it, but it seems so unnatural when it hits us. And Paul is saying, look Timothy, if you're going to be in the warfare, that there are problems, there are difficulties, there are heartaches, and be willing to take your share of them.

Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And then he says, keep yourself unentangled from the affairs of this life. Verse four, no man that woth, this really means no man on active duty, no man that woth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Now, there are several lovely thoughts in this verse. First of all, the emphasis in the first part of the verse is on the word entangleth. It doesn't mean that the soldier in the Lord's army doesn't have anything to do with the affairs of this life.

You'd have to go out of the world to avoid contact with the affairs of this life. But the point is that the soldier is not to become entangled with the affairs of this life. If a soldier is in the United States Army and he's fighting overseas in the Middle East, it would really be contradictory for him to be trying to pull off real estate deals in Montclair, wouldn't it? So what kind of a soldier is that? He's divided, his mind is divided, he's trying to do two different things at once.

And Paul is saying here, be wholehearted, keep your priorities straight, and avoid distractions in the Christian warfare. I like that last part of the verse. It says that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.

In other words, Timothy, live your life asking yourself the question, will this please my captain? The captain, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ. And remember, Timothy, you have enlisted for life. This is not a temporary campaign, it's a lifetime commitment.

Sometimes we think of the Christian life as a 50-yard dash, it's not at all. We think of it as a single campaign, it's not at all. It's a complete life of dedication and devotion to him.

So the thought of the soldier then includes several ideas. It includes the idea of being willing to take our share of hardship. The soldier isn't necessarily guaranteed a waterbed to sleep on on the front lines.

Water in the trench, but not a waterbed. Secondly, be eager to please your captain. Thirdly, keep your priorities straight.

Fourthly, avoid entangling alliances or distractions. And fifth, remember that you have enlisted for life. Well, there's a certain glamour to being a soldier, I guess.

There's a certain glamour to the uniform, and there's always the sweetness of victory at the end. And although Paul doesn't say that, he's leading up to that. He's leading up to that, and we'll see it as we go along.

Next, the athlete says, if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strives lawfully. Here we have the athlete, and I have no doubt that Paul was thinking of the Olympic games in Greece when he wrote this. And what ideas are brought before us in connection with the athlete? First of all, self-denial.

Secondly, sacrifice. Thirdly, an agony of effort. An agony of effort.

Think of that man in the race, and there are two men running right beside him, and he puts on that tremendous agony, that spurt at the end, to pass the ribbon first. And then, of course, you have in this verse the whole idea of obeying the rules, except he strives lawfully. Are there rules in the Christian life? A lot of people don't like to think there are.

They say, we're under grace, we're not under law. But the contest has rules. We must practice self-discipline, just as the athlete must practice.

So we must practice self-discipline. Paul says, I buffet my body and bring it into subjection, lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. God help the man or woman, young man or young woman, who just easily gives in to every lust of the flesh.

He or she is bound for eventually ruin. Then another rule of the contest is we don't use carnal weapons. We use spiritual weapons, which are mighty through God.

The pulling down is strong. We must keep ourselves pure. There are rules of training, and we must not strive, but be patient.

The New Testament is filled with the rules that must be observed. And then the third illustration is the farmer, and with this we close. It says, the husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.

Now this is kind of a surprising end to Paul's argument. He's been talking about the disciplined soldier. He's been talking about the athlete who practices self-denial, and now he comes and he uses the illustration of a farmer, and he says when the harvest is brought in, he must be first to participate in the fruit of that harvest.

So that kind of doesn't fit. I think it fits quite beautifully. First of all, the farmer is an illustration of patient service.

I mean, you don't have all the glamour to farming that you'd have in soldiering. You don't have the challenge in the same sense. You have the man going out and plowing his field.

That's not too glamorous. You have him put the grain, the seed in. That's not too glamorous.

You have him cultivating the land, and then you have the harvest. There's no glamour of peril or of applause. There's nobody at the side of the field clapping as he finishes plowing the field.

What is it? It's a lot of hard work. That's what it is. But there's the joy of harvest.

The great time of the year for the farmers when the crops are brought in, and the silos are bulging, and the barn is bursting, and the wine vats are overflowing. And so Paul has been teaching Timothy a progression here. There is a progression.

The soldier, the athlete, the farmer, and at the end he must be the first to partake. He is entitled to first share of the fruits. And so that's why Paul says in verse 7, consider what I say, the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

And I think that means you think over these illustrations, Timothy, and as you think them over, thoughts will come to your mind like swallows to the gable of a barn. There's a lot more to these illustrations than I have told you in these verses Paul is saying. You think them through, and they're filled with spiritual meat for you.

Now in the will of God, we'll try to go on from verse 8 tonight, Lord willing, and perhaps finish chapter 2. Shall we look to the Lord now in closing prayer? Father, we come to you now in the worthy and precious name of the Lord Jesus. We thank you for this testimony. We've heard of your matchless grace and reaching down and touching the life of our brother Paul, and we just pray that he might go on from strength to strength and from grace to grace.

We do thank you for everyone in the meeting this morning who has heard the call of Christ and has answered, has put his faith and trust in the Savior. For any here who are not decided Christians, Father, we pray that that any such might be deeply plowed up by the Holy Spirit of God in conviction of sin and brought contritely to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray now that you will feel home to our hearts the lessons that we've had in this passage from 2 Timothy.

Father, may we be those who always seek to do the thing that pleases our beloved captain. We ask it in his worthy name and for his sake. Amen.

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