

The Promise of Hope

Series on 2 Timothy

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Bible Text: 2 Timothy 1

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Well, do take your Bibles and turn to 2 Timothy. We have been in 2 Samuel for a long time, so time of a change. We have gone about a thousand years further on from the time of Samuel now to the time of Timothy. It is the last letter that Paul writes. These pastoral letters, 1 Timothy, Titus and now 2 Timothy in that order are among the last letters that we have of Paul's, most likely written in the Mamertine prison at the base of the Capitoline Hill in Rome. We as a family visited there once and I remember as we found the prison or Christine found it, actually. We had been looking for it. She found it and has taken the credit for that ever since being able to read the map better than the rest of us. And we were standing in one of the cells in that prison shaped like an upside down teacup, originally with a hole in the ceiling that was the means through which prisoners were lowered down so there was no way of escape. And was in a cell like that when the apostle Paul would have been kept. In the days of the first century the prison was much larger than what is left today, a huge prison. Paul would have been kept there even in the high of summer in over 100 degree heat outside. In that prison there was a kind of dampness you could feel that went to your very bones. It was a dreadful place.

And as we stood there we thought, as a family we thought of what it was like for the apostle Paul to be in a cell like that perhaps in that very prison before his being beheaded.

So there is something salutary as we read this last letter.

Coming into the beginning of the letter let me begin by telling you two stories and making a comment. I wonder if you know the story of the Mennonite Brethren movement. The Mennonite Brethren movement are still known of their social work and social activism. And one particular analysis of the Mennonite Brethren movement is something like this. The first generation believed and proclaimed the gospel and thought that social entailments kind of flowed from the gospel. The second generation assumed the gospel and emphasized the social entailments. The third generation denied and still denies the gospel and all that is left are the social entailments.

Back in 1919 Trinity Great Court in Cambridge, Cambridge University in England, I became familiar with Cambridge over many, many years of traveling there and speaking at the KICU. KICU stands for the Cambridge Intercollegiate Christian Union, KICU for short. And KICU came out of another movement called the Student Christian Movement

back in the beginning of the 20th century. And in 1919 there was an attempt to reconcile these two groups, the evangelical KICU and the liberal Student Christian Movement. There was a meeting and Norman Grubb's account of the meeting held between himself and a man called Rollo Pelly of the Student Christian Movement, his account goes like this.

“After an hour's talk I asked Rollo point blank. ‘Does the SCM put the atoning blood of Jesus Christ central?’ He hesitated and then said, ‘Well, we acknowledge it, but it is not necessarily central.’ Dan Dick and I then said that this settled the matter for us in KICU. We could never join something that did not maintain the atoning blood of Jesus Christ at its center. And so we parted company.”

In its earliest days the SCM believed and proclaimed the gospel. The next generation assumed the gospel, but was much more interested in speaking about cultural, contemporary issues and social matters. The following generations denied the gospel, but held on to the cultural engagement and the social issues.

So there is this progress: proclaiming in one generation, assuming in the next generation and denying in the third generation. That may be an overly simplistic assessment, but it does illustrate how movements and churches can lose their way and in broadest outline we can see the beginnings of it here in the letter that we know as 2 Timothy, because at the heart of this letter is the concern of the apostle Paul about losing the gospel.

Let me illustrate what this letter in its broadest terms teaches us. The situation is serious. It is grim. First of all things are going badly in the churches of Asia, probably especially in Ephesus where Timothy had been the pastor. This letter names opponents to the gospel and people who had defected from the faith. Some of them were afraid, afraid of what the faith would bring upon them of persecution and so on. Others were ashamed at Paul their great apostle was now a jail bird. Secondly, things are not going well in Rome. The apostle had had his first hearing before the authorities, perhaps before Nero himself. And he had had nobody to act as his advocate. He had no attorney to stand and speak for him in his defense. And although he still has Luke who wrote the gospel with him, although he still has contact with some Christian Roman Christians there, nonetheless, the apostle feels abandoned. He feels isolated in his current situation. And, thirdly—and here is the reason for the letter—thirdly, Timothy himself is showing signs of becoming wobbly. I am sure that Americans know what that means. I have got to translate here. Visitor, I have to translate from time to time from real English to what you speak here. But apparently you know what that means. He is showing signs of being wobbly.

One commentator puts it like this. One gets the clear sense that Timothy is in over his head. He is in over his head. He needs a spiritual defibrillator to jump start his faith. And so you find warnings about cowardice and shame and encouragement by the apostle to take whatever suffering is coming his way. And anxiety on the part of the apostle that Timothy who began well in his faith and in the ministry, that Timothy would finish well in his faith and in his ministry.

You can start well as a Christian and not finish well. You can start well as a minister and not finish well until you get past the finish line and wake up in glory. We have to be encouraging and praying for each other that we continue and persevere to the very end. Paul is concerned about Timothy at that letter at that point.

And one of the things you learn as you read this book is there is no triumphalism in Paul's writing. He is not under any illusions about the gospel's path in the future, not for Paul, the kind of high flowing grandiose, great, grand vision that was unleashed upon Christendom at the beginning of the 20th century where we were going to Christianize the world in this generation. None of that nonsense, none of that hyped up kind of triumphalism we hear in some quarters of evangelicalism that think that somehow or another we march out of our churches into a world that is anxiously waiting for our message and that if only we spend enough money on it and throw enough people at it, that we will solve the problem in the world which is gagging for the gospel will come hungry to it.

None of that stuff here. Paul is much more realistic. He knows that the great tribulation has already begun. He knows there are errors abounding, evils abounding. He knows that in the Church itself people are unsteady. They are wobbly in their faith.

And so he writes to Timothy. And as he writes to Timothy we get an insight into his heart. It is a great heart. He loves Timothy. Here is a man, the apostle Paul, who is not some kind of isolated Christian loner. He loves people and he loves the people of God, as we will see. And as he writes to Timothy he is absolutely clear of Timothy's dangers and he musters all of his skill as a Christian persuader to shake this young man up, to bolster his morale and to help him refocus on the business that God has called him to.

Now in doing that we look at the introduction here this morning. In doing that he presents us with his credentials, his apostolic credentials, first of all. And that may be a surprise. Apparently it is a surprise to some scholars who think this must have been written in the second century because it has this statement here. How can it be a personal letter and also be from someone who makes this great claim right at the very beginning that he is an apostle of Christ Jesus?

But it wouldn't be a problem to them if they knew Paul and we know Paul. And what Paul does whenever he writes anybody is he reminds them of who he is, because he knows that you and I are going to be reading this one day and we will see in a moment how I know that he knows that you and I are going to be reading this one day.

Thomas Auden in one of his books says this about Paul here. "Paul did not lay down his office in order to take up a friendship or spiritual parenting role or vice versa. He did not see the two of these things as incompatible. He believed that the ministerial role was to be played out in the context of the family, the family of faith or, as he calls it in the pastorals, the household of God. In ancient households, both the formal titles and means of address were coupled with personal and affectionate language as well, especially relationships where there was a subordinate and a superordinate involved."

So Paul begins this very personal letter by introducing himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. When he calls himself an apostle he is indicating his office and authority. He has special authority as one who has been sent—that is what the word *αποστέλλω* (ap-os-tel'-lo) means—to be sent, sent by Christ to act and write on Christ's behalf so that when you hear Paul you hear Jesus. When you read Paul you read Jesus. What Paul says, Jesus says to the churches.

And through his writings he regularly stresses his direct appointment by Jesus, that he was empowered by him, that he was commissioned by him, that he saw the risen, resurrected Lord Jesus, that he stood alongside the other apostles as the foundation of the Church on which the Church is built. We are a holy, catholic and apostolic Church built upon the message of the apostles found in our New Testament. We are a New Testament Church.

And his particular specialty, if you will, as an apostle, is his minster to the Gentile, non Jewish world. So he begins by stressing this. And do you see that being an apostle does not stifle his ability to relate personally and intimately to this man Timothy?

You know, there are times when I have been visiting churches and I have preached a sermon, whatever subject it was on, and the minster will come up to me afterwards and say to me, "I am so glad that you said what you said this morning. I have to face them every week and I wouldn't have the courage to tell them what you told them this morning."

And you kind of want to slap them across the face. It is not that you do that to other ministers. But you do want to kind of smack them around the face and say, "Well, I thought that was what you were paid to do. I though that was your job. I thought that was your calling." If you really love them, you will tell them what they really need to hear. You won't just say, "Well, somebody else coming along some time might say it to them." If you really love them, you have to say the truth to them, speaking the truth in love. And that is what Paul is doing to Timothy right there.

And there are notes, the are indications in the text that, in fact, this letter is not just a personal letter. It is an official letter. There is an official mandate. There is a whole string of texts that I could give you right now that have imperatives in them. Let me just give you some by way of example.

In chapter four, a formal charge:

"By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit,"¹ 2 Timothy 1:14.

Or two verse one:

"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus."²

¹ 2 Timothy 1:14.

Or chapter two verse 14.

“Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.”³

Or in chapter four verse one:

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.⁴

And there is a whole selection of others here, chapter two verse three, verse seven, verse eight, verse 14, 15, 22, 23; chapter three verse one, chapter three verse 14, chapter four verses five and... a whole list of them. You can look them up for yourself if you can write them all down. Did you write them all down? Ok. You can listen to a tape and write them all down then.

Imperatives that give the idea that this is a mandate. This is an apostolic charge to Timothy. And it is a charge to Timothy that the apostle expects you and I to hear. He lets the cat out of the bag right at the very end, right at the very last end of this letter. Suddenly you realize that Paul all the time expected you to hear this letter. It ends, chapter four verse 22:

“Grace be with you.”⁵

It has been personal right up to that moment. Now he says, “Grace be to you, plural. Grace be to you all.” I can’t say it with a southern accent, so I will say it with a Glaswegian accent. “Grace be to yous all, all of you.”

In other words, Paul says, “I know that you are going to be listening in there at 10th Pres, you know, in 2013 there in Philadelphia.” Well, I am sure he didn’t really think about us at all at that point, but he knew that there were going to be believing people reading this stuff because he is writing the Word of God to Timothy and he expects us to overhear.

So he is an apostle. He is writing as an official capacity and he is an apostle of Jesus by the will of God. The will of God is the efficient cause of his call to be an apostle. He understands that everything he is and everything that has happened to him, everything comes under the orbit of the will of God. Nothing is outside of the will of God. God has ordained whatever comes to pass.

² 2 Timothy 2:1.

³ 2 Timothy 2:14-15.

⁴ 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

⁵ 2 Timothy 4:22.

And so he understand that his background, his birth, his education, his life experience, his career, his conversion, his commission, the circumstances of his life and the prison cell, all of it come under the will of God for his life.

But you notice not only that as you listen to his credentials. You notice, again, that although he has now had the death sentence—we know that from chapter four verse six—as he waits the summons for execution on his mind is the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus. We are still in verse one, by the way, the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

Whenever this word promise is used in Paul's writings it always has to do with salvation, the rescue of God. And the apostle expounds it most fully in Galatians when he says that what was promised by God to Abraham, that promise, and his spiritual descendants has now been fulfilled in Christ.

He writes to Titus. Titus comes between 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. And in Titus he speaks of the hope of eternal life which God who never lies promised before the ages began, the promise of God. He says in 1 Timothy four he says this promise is for this present life, but also for the life to come. In this present life, the promise of life is expressed in that spiritual life when someone trust in the Lord Jesus and they are made alive by God. They are enlivened by the Spirit.

Do you see yourself this morning and you are in church. Are you watching this by webcast? And you see it. You have got it in your mind. You understand the gospel and you are relying on the Lord Jesus and you are trusting in the Lord Jesus and you see that you are different, therefore, from everybody else around you in your circle. And you say, "Why do I believe and they don't believe?" It is a miracle. It is a supernatural work of God. It is spiritual life that has begun in you in this present life.

It is only the beginning, because the God who saved your soul is going to save your body. There is going to be a resurrection body we professed in earlier in the service. We believe in the resurrection of the body. There will be a new heavens and a new earth. The promise of life in Christ Jesus doesn't end with death. It is enlarged with death. And it is enlarged even more at the resurrection of the dead and the new heavens and the new earth. This is the promise of life and Paul in his prison cell is clinging on to that promise of life in Christ Jesus. Those are his credentials.

Then there are the courtesies, the apostolic courtesies to Timothy.

"To Timothy, my beloved child."⁶

This is so in character with the apostle. He loves the people of God. He loves them. He writes to the Romans. He has not even met the Romans and he says, "You know, you are beloved by God and you are called by him."

⁶ 2 Timothy 1:2.

He writes to the Corinthians. He knows them. He wishes he didn't know them, but he knows them, because that is the most problematical church you find in the New Testament. But he writes to these problematic Corinthians and he says, "You are my beloved children, wayward, pains in the neck, but I love you nonetheless." And you parents, you know exactly what he is talking about. And here he is writing to Timothy and he can say about Timothy, "You are my beloved child."

Now scholars notice a slight shift and I think they are right today. I didn't think this when I came to the passage. I have to say I used to rubbish these scholars to this view. But I can change, too, you know, just so you know that. I am not fixed in my ways. I may be an old guy, but I am not fixed in my ways. And so I come to this and I just go, yeah, the more you look at 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, yes, there is a slight change of tone. There is. In the first letter Paul is also saying about Timothy, you know, you are my beloved child and you are my loyal son. You are loyal to the gospel. But here as Paul writes this second letter, Timothy is still his beloved child. He loves him to death, but something is taking place in the heart of Timothy.

Ben Wetherington one of the scholars puts it like this. "This letter reads more like a worrying love letter from a parent to a timid or frightened child." A worrying love letter. I think that is what it is. Paul is concerned about Timothy and he is concerned about Timothy because of what? Because Timothy is in danger of dropping the ball. He is in danger about losing the gospel.

In 1 Timothy, Timothy is the legitimate heir to the legacy of the apostle. Here the apostle's concern is the legacy is being squandered. I don't know if you have a new family, you know and you have the money and you are hoping one day you will get some of it. You know, you are praying for their glorification soon, that they will... so that you get the money. And then, of course, you notice that they are spending that money in the worst ways. You keep on thinking why did they have to go and buy that, you know, Mercedes, you know, just for their... you know for Tuesdays? And then they have got that other thing that they drive the rest of the time. And they are going on expensive vacations and you think they are too old for vacations. Why are they spending the money this way?

And we have somebody in our family did that. They just squandered all the money. When it came, you know, when they were dead, you know, there wasn't much to go around left. It is terrible when you use people doing that kind of stuff. And what Paul is afraid of is that Timothy is squandering the legacy. This is become a real concern. We will see this as we dive deeper and deeper into the book.

Well, you notice the courtesies. He emphasizes the relationship. He doesn't forget that the relationship is there, but there is this blend of personal closeness and pastoral authority, intimacy and dignity, friendship and office. And he doesn't lose sight of the one and the other. Those two things go hand in hand. I think there is an application here to those of you who are parents. Don't remember, parents, don't forget, rather, don't forget that you are the grown up. Remember that. You know, when we started having children I was

about 10 and I remember, you know, at that stage in life, you know, I would come home and Christine was telling me, “You really need to deal with that boy.” And she would give me this catalog of things that needed dealt with. And all I wanted to do was just, you know, come in, you know, and be... I wanted to be the fun guy that, you know, all day came in from work, you know, played with the Lego and {?} and all the kudos of being a great dad, dinner and so on. I didn't really want to be, because I avoid confrontation and didn't really want to be the one to administer the discipline, shall we say?

Basically I really didn't want to be the grown up. And you guys, particularly, you guys need to know that the office of dad involves taking seriously the task of doing what needs to be done. You are the grown up. And so Paul as he is writing to Timothy, you see, he loves him, but he is not anxious that they have a good relationship, that Timothy could say, “You know, I am really close to the apostle Paul.” Paul remembers that he is an apostle. He has an office here that has to be discharged. Those two things go hand in hand. And he has no greater wish for Timothy and, by the way, this is a very interesting. Paul expands his usual greeting here, grace, mercy and peace. Grace, God's unmerited pardon and transforming favor and power be with you; mercy, God's warm tender affection for those who are in need; peace, the fullness the wholeness of God's blessing on his people. He is already preparing the way for what he really has to say further on when he says some hard things because Timothy is going to need all the grace, all the mercy and all the peace that is going to take for the apostle is going to say to him in this letter.

Well, then, thirdly, we have the apostolic confidences. I thank God, he says. He had been writing once from another prison. You know, the apostle was a jail bird. He was in prison a lot. And he had written a number of letters from another prison at an earlier period and one of those letters he said, “To be thankful in all circumstances, in all circumstances.” Now he is modeling that. He is being thankful. I am thankful. I thank God. I thank God whom I serve. I see my life in his service. I am anxious to please him as much as possible. I am thankful, he says. I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors.

Do you notice he brings up his ancestors? His ancestors are his Jewish ancestors. Among his ancestors are Jewish believers. And he is conscious of them as he writes to Timothy that he has a legacy of faith behind him, these Jewish believers. Because the apostle Paul, like the entire early church do not see Christianity as a disjunction from Judaism. Rather, they recognize the continuity between Jewish believers and Christian believers, that Christianity grows out of, culminates the Jewish faith and that Christianity is fulfilled Judaism.

By the way, this precludes any hint, anywhere in the New Testament of anti-Semitism. Both Paul and Timothy stood in the Jewish tradition, grateful for their Jewish parents, grateful for a Jewish education, grateful for the Torah and the prophets that constitute the rich river of revelation that flows from God toward its fulfillment and culmination in Christ.

And how could they ever possibly denigrate that which our Lord Jesus had so highly commended when he said to a foreigner Samaritan woman, “Salvation is of the Jews.”

So he puts that out there. He was conscious that he had come from ancestors. It struck me. It struck somebody else this morning talking to me over coffee that this is, perhaps, Paul saying, “You know, some of my ancestors were believing Jews who actually believed in the coming of the Messiah who probably welcomed the Messiah earlier than I did. I am grateful to God for them.”

He says, “I thank God whom I serve as did my ancestors with a clear conscience.” What does he mean by that? Does he mean that he is conscious of no sin? This is the man who will say that he is the chief of sinners. He is absolutely honest about himself. He knows that he is not perfect. He wrote that to the Philippians. He said, “It is not that I have already arrived or I am already perfect. I am not there yet.”

So what does he mean when we read about a clear conscience? The language echoes the language of Psalm 24.

“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.”⁷

Well, who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? Who can stand in the holy place, in the very presence of God? Well, do you notice the apostle has already hinted at this. He has already spoken about the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus. That promise of life, future, as well as present, is conditioned upon being in Christ. Who is able to ascend the hill of the Lord? Jesus is. Who can stand in God’s holy place? Jesus already is there in the heavenly tabernacle, in the very presence of God. How did he get there? Because Jesus had clean hands and a pure heart. And those who are in Christ, those who are in Christ have a clear conscience before God. Why? Because they are wrapped around with the righteousness of Jesus.

He speaks with a clear conscience. Paul knew himself to be washed in the blood of Christ, because that is what the blood of Christ does. It washes our hearts.

And he is thankful for Timothy.

“I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.”⁸

You see, he is getting closer and closer to Timothy. I remember you. I pray for you. You are in my mind all the time. Specifically I remember your tears. I remember the last time I saw you and we were saying good bye and I remember you broke down and you cried. I remember your tears. And I long to see you. I long to see you that I might be filled with joy. he is being straight with is man. He does want to see him. To see him would bring him great joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith. Going to have to say some hard

⁷ Psalm 24:3-4.

⁸ 2 timothy 1:3.

things, Timothy. He hasn't told him that yet, by the way. Timothy is reading this and he is thinking, aw, isn't this nice? He remembers me and he remembers {?}. He saw the tears and the {?}. Paul says to Timothy, "I remember your sincere faith. You are a real believer and I remember where you got that faith. I remember the heritage. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, then in your mother Eunice and now I am sure dwells in you as well."

There are some hard things that Paul is going to say to Timothy further down the letter and I am sure as he reads those hard things he goes back to this phrase. In spite of what he is saying to me when he is roughing me up, he is sure that it dwells in me also.

You know, it is a wonderful picture, isn't it, this picture that Paul is painting here. Timothy has a legacy of faith, a heritage of faith. In fact, this is a lovely picture, isn't it, of faith as a trans generational family tradition. The Bible is well aware from its beginning that families play a crucial role in the transmission of the apostolic and prophetic tradition.

None of our talk of evangelism today of reaching outsiders. Let's remember that the primary growth of the church in all generations has been through our covenant children embracing the faith for themselves. And even complete outsiders. Who knows? Who knows when that complete outsider didn't have a great grandmother they never met or a great, great, great grandfather they never knew who prayed for generations to come that they would come to faith in Christ. We just don't know.

I read a book a while ago about New York when it was New Amsterdam and of one couple who were married at that point. And the historian was saying that he reckoned that one couple's descendants numbered in America today about eight million people. Amazing, for one couple. And you think what legacy of faith has been passed on that we are not even aware of.

You notice this apostle, you know, as well as I know, this apostle has got very strong views about who can and who cannot be a minister of the gospel, a teaching elder in the church. But do you notice who it is that is instructing Timothy in his faith? It is his mother and his grandmother. We don't know about the men. There is no men in this, by the way. For those of you who are single parents, particularly women on your own, do you notice that we are not told? We know that one of the parents was a Greek, probably a pagan and probably never converted. And whoever they were, they were not involved in the Christian education of the children. They are either dead, not Christians or gone AWOL. And these two women are responsible for the transmission of the Christian tradition to Timothy.

I think of my own Christian life my mother and my grandmother were the two most significant people in my own Christian life. My mother who used to sing to me Christian songs and read to me Christian stories who was a bit of a legalist, really, my mother. She had all kinds of rules and regulations about tidying your room and that kind of thing, but they weren't in the 10 Commandments. But I would never tell my mother things the I

told my grandmother. My grandmother was a Christian giant of a person. She lost her husband at the age of 40. He went out to work one day and never came back. The place where he was working was hit during a bombing run on Glasgow during the Second World War. She had grit and determination. She was like a rock. And she was fun.

When I got into the Beatles, I remember telling her. I could never tell my mother that. I said, "I am listening to the Beatles." She looked at me and she said, "Well, they look like fine young men." That put me off the Beatles for life. I became a Beach Boys fan after that.

So confession time at Tenth. But it was my grandmother who single handedly ignited in my imagination a passion for preaching the Word of God. I owe everything to her. My grandmother gave me a little card advertising meetings in Glasgow where the speaker was Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse and gave me my first ever Christian book that I ever got which was an old book of Barnhouse published in the 1930s.

Now why does Paul mention Timothy's heritage here? Why does he do this right and early on here? He is just reading this for the very first time. And actually Paul introducing it here is at the main he is getting at the main reason for writing to Timothy, because what is on Paul's mind here is the transmission of the gospel from one generation to another. And what he is saying is that just as the gospel was transmitted from Lois and Eunice to Timothy, Timothy now has to be sure that the gospel, intact, no additives or subtractions, the gospel intact is passed on to the next generation, because you and I are part of this great movement of God in the world. We say when we confess the creed that we believe in the communion of saints. We are not into chronological snobbery. The believers in the past were believers like us. The people that wrote these old hymns were believers like us. I mean, sometimes we forget that we also belong to this age and this moment in time. We do sometimes forget that. But we are certainly not missing out on anything by reminding ourselves that we are pygmies standing on the shoulders of giants of the faith and that we have fellowship not only of horizontally with other believers, around the world, but vertically with believers who are already in glory and that when we meet Sunday by Sunday by Sunday we are not just joined by the occasional visitors that come through our doors, but we are joining with that enumerable company of the redeemed in heaven. We are part of that. And we are responsible. We are responsible of that tradition that has been handed to us, that content that has been put in our hands, that ball that has been thrown in our direction to catch it, to capture it, to keep it and not to lose it.

Paul reminds Timothy of his own ancestry and then of Timothy's heritage and he is saying to this man now surreptitiously, he hasn't, you know, now the glove is still on. He hasn't taken the glove off to reveal the iron fist as he drives the message in. he is doing this gently, first of all, to Timothy. This is not the way... this is not my preferred means, by the way. My preferred means is {?} means in taking two when he just takes down all the {?}. That is my method. And so I am rebuked this morning as I read Paul. Here is Paul dealing tenderly with Timothy. And he is breaking him into the idea.

Listen, Timothy, the gospel is a heritage. You got it from somewhere. You need to make

sure you keep it. And later on he will say, “You need to make sure you hand it over intact, complete.” His passion as he writes this letter, as he sees churches dissolving, as he sees unbelief growing, as he sees good men like Timothy wobbling, Paul’s passion is the faithful transmission of the gospel.

And that should be our passion as a congregation. We need to so live and operate that the next person you have as the minister of this church here preaches the same gospel as this one and the one before and the one before and the one before. That is a non negotiable item. And it takes us all to have our wits about us, all of us to police each other to ensure the gospel remains intact in our hands.

Let’s pray.

Father, we thank you for this wonderful man, Paul, for his capacity for sheer human affection and for his office as the teacher of the Church and apostle of Jesus. We pray that you would please help us in our different capacities and in our different callings and as part of this congregation to be anxiously concerned to ensure that the gospel that was given to us would be passed over intact to those whom we influence in our lives. We ask in Jesus’ strong name. Amen.