

The Promise of Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 April 2024

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] All right, well this morning we are beginning a new sermon series. We've been working our way through some of the letters of the Apostle Paul. Last fall we did Paul's first letter to Timothy.

Then since January we've been working our way through Titus, Paul's letter to Titus. And now as we head toward the summer months, we're looking at Paul's second letter to Timothy. And I am so looking forward to journeying with you through this portion of God's Word.

This is a very powerful letter. It's an encouraging word from God. And I'm trusting that it's just what our church needs in the weeks ahead to grow spiritually.

So what's this letter all about? Well I know that we have a variety of people here this morning.

Some of you have been followers of Jesus for decades. Others for just a short while.

Some of you were here for our first letter to Timothy as we looked at in the fall. And some of you missed that. So I want to take a few minutes just to explain what the letter of 2 Timothy is.

[1 : 05] Who wrote this letter? What kind of writing is this? And where does it fit into the bigger story of the Bible? So last week we heard about how Jesus died and rose again.

We heard about how he appeared to his followers over a period of 40 days. And then was taken up into heaven. We heard last Sunday about how Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon his apostles. Enabling them to speak on his behalf. And we heard about how the apostle Peter proclaimed his very first sermon to a crowd in Jerusalem with about 3,000 people putting their trust in Jesus and being baptized.

We usually speak about that day as the day the church was born. And Peter and the other apostles from that day on they kept proclaiming Jesus to the people more and more.

People came to repent. People came to believe. And the Jewish leaders they didn't like this. And so they began persecuting the followers of Jesus and going after them.

[2 : 14] And many of the followers of Jesus scattered. And wherever they went they began telling people about Jesus. And suddenly churches began springing up in all the surrounding nations and peoples.

And then in the midst of all this there was a man named Saul. Saul was one of the Pharisees. He was one of those religious leader types. And he himself was a persecutor of the church of Jesus. And Luke tells us in the book of Acts about how Jesus himself from heaven stopped Paul in his tracks on the road to Damascus. And Jesus revealed himself to Saul.

And Saul himself became a believer. And even more Jesus chose Saul to be one of his apostles. One of his spokesmen. And Jesus gave Saul who after that point on he went by Paul.

Jesus gave Paul a task. And that task was to go to all of the non-Jewish nations around the Mediterranean Sea. Was kind of the area that he operated in.

[3 : 20] And to tell them about Jesus. And the salvation that he offers. And so Paul did this. He went on three what we call missionary journeys. Traveling from city to city.

Proclaiming the good news of Jesus. And Luke tells us in Acts that some people in each of these towns and cities. Came to believe in Jesus. And local churches were born.

All around the Mediterranean Sea. Well in one of these cities Paul came to. He came to a place where there was a young man named Timothy. And Timothy's mother was a Jew.

And his father was a Greek. But his mother raised him. Teaching him about the Lord. And so when Paul and Barnabas came to Timothy's city.

On his first missionary journey. Timothy believed. And accepted the good news of Jesus. And according to Luke. Timothy grew in his faith.

[4 : 20] And he matured. To the point that the other Christians in that little church regarded him very highly. And so Paul actually took Timothy on as his co-worker. And they traveled together.

From place to place to place. Proclaiming the news of Jesus. One of these cities. Where a church began was the ancient city of Ephesus.

And Ephesus was the capital city of a Roman province called Asia at the time. It's along what is today the western coast of Turkey. And Paul stationed Timothy there.

In Ephesus. To work with the church that had been established there. And to help it grow. As we heard last fall. Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy while he was there in Ephesus.

Probably around 55 to 60 AD. So we're talking like 25 to 30 years after Jesus ascended to heaven. And for those of you who missed this past fall.

[5 : 26] Paul's first letter to Timothy was filled with encouragement. And it was filled with instruction. There were false teachers in the church that needed to be dealt with.

There was division. People were getting caught up in all kinds of controversial trivialities. And so Paul gave encouragement and instructions in that first letter.

About how Timothy should deal with all of that in Ephesus. And then there was also some more general instruction. Just for the people of the church. About how the people in the church should live and function together.

As a local family of believers. Well now Paul is writing a second letter to Timothy. Some time has passed. And we're going to start right into it here.

By reading the first few verses. Let me read it for you. Paul writes. Paul. Paul. An apostle of Christ Jesus.

[6 : 22] By the will of God. In keeping with the promise of life. That is in Christ Jesus. To Timothy. My dear son.

Grace. Mercy. And peace. From God the Father. And Christ Jesus. Our Lord. I thank God. Whom I serve as my ancestors did. With a clear conscience. As night and day. I constantly remember you. In my prayers. Recalling your tears.

I long to see you. So that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith. Which first lived in your grandmother Lois.

And in your mother Eunice. And I am persuaded. Now lives. In you also. This is as far as we're going to work through today.

[7 : 24] So Paul introduces himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus. He reminds Timothy of his unique. God given role. To speak on behalf of Jesus Christ. And he reminds Timothy.

That he became an apostle. By the will of God. This was God's decision. God chose Paul specially. To have this role. Very few were chosen to be apostles.

And there's a curious detail here. That Paul puts in. An apostle of Christ Jesus. By the will of God. In keeping with the promise of life. That is in Christ Jesus.

Now the precise meaning of the preposition here. Is a little unclear. Some translations say. According to the promise of life. Some say for the sake of the promise of life. This one says. In keeping with the promise of life. It's a flexible word. Probably his meaning. Is that he is an apostle. Whose purpose. Or role.

[8 : 24] Is to proclaim. The promise of life. The promise of life. That comes in. And through. Jesus Christ. Why does Paul.

Right here in the beginning. Highlight this particular aspect. Of the gospel. That Jesus. Has made. A promise.

Of life. Would you start a letter like this? Byron. A mechanic. In Davidson. In keeping with the promise of life.

He hasn't even. Said who he's writing it to yet. Why does he highlight. This particular aspect. Of the gospel. That Jesus. Has made a promise of life. Right here at the top.

In verse one. I'm going to leave you hanging. We're going to. Get to this. At the very end. And answer this question. Next. Let's notice how Paul addresses Timothy.

[9 : 22] He says to Timothy. My dear son. Now that word dear. Could also be translated. Beloved. Or dearly loved. Son. So right out of the gate.

Paul's letting Timothy know. Just how much he means to him. Timothy. I dearly. Love you. You are to me. As a son. Paul and Timothy.

Had a very close relationship. Because of their work together. In the gospel cause. Because of their common faith. In Jesus. Which we heard about. In the first letter.

But perhaps. There's a little more here. Than last time. These words. Have a warmness. And a deep affection. In them. Paul gives.

The customary blessing. That you'll see. In a lot of his letters. He says. Grace. Mercy. And peace. From God the Father. And Christ Jesus. Our Lord. This is kind of like a prayer. At the beginning.

[10:19] May God the Father. And may Christ Jesus. Our Lord. May he give you grace. Timothy. And mercy. And peace. And then Paul moves into this.

Expression of thanksgiving. In verses three to five. And it. It kind of. Was in those days. Customary. To put an expression of thanksgiving. In a personal letter.

Something you're thankful for. About the person. That doesn't. Make this formulaic. Or take away from. The sincerity of this. But maybe it just helps us. Understand a little bit.

Why Paul goes straight into this. Before he gets on to other things. And this is Paul's statement of thanksgiving. He says. I thank God. Whom I serve as my ancestors did.

With a clear conscience. As night and day. I constantly remember you. In my prayers. Recalling your tears. Tears. I long to see you.

[11:14] So that I may be filled with joy. I'm reminded of your sincere faith. Which first lived in your grandmother Lois. And in your mother Eunice. And I am persuaded.

Now lives in you. Also. Believe it or not. These three verses. Are one big sentence. And tying everything in these words together.

Is this simple statement. I put some ellipses in. So you can kind of just see it. Basically he's saying. I thank God. As I remember you. Timothy. In my prayers.

This is Paul's main thought. Everything else here. Just fleshes this one statement out more. What does Paul want Timothy to know. Right out of the get go. He wants him to know.

That he's thankful for Timothy. Timothy. And he's been expressing that thanks to God. In his prayers. That's the whole thing.

[12:13] The whole point. Of verses three to five. I've been thinking of you Timothy. I've been thanking God for you Timothy. And everything else here. Is kind of the how. Of his thanksgiving.

And the why. Of his thanksgiving. For Timothy. And we're going to look at both of those. Let's start by looking at. The how. How does Paul.

Thank God for Timothy. He says. I thank God. Whom I serve. As my ancestors did. With a clear conscience. As night and day. I remember you.

In my prayers. A clear conscience. That's a funny thing to say. At the start of a statement. Of thanksgiving. Why a clear conscience. We're going to come back to that.

In a moment. The next thing we notice. Probably. The first thing we notice. Many of us. He says. I thank. God. As night and day.

[13:10] I constantly. Remember. You. In my prayers. So Paul is thanking God. Constantly. For Timothy.

He's been doing a lot of it. Lately. Night and day. He says. Like round the clock. I mean. Think about this.

He's saying. I've been thinking about you. A lot. Timothy. I've been thanking God. For you a lot. Not just here and there. When I occasionally. Remember you.

But like. Every single day. And all throughout. Each day. And even in my waking hours. Of the night. I've been thinking of you. And I've been thanking God. For you.

Wow. Why? Why is Paul. Thinking about Timothy. And thanking God. For Timothy. So much.

[14:04] Well. We've probably already heard. One reason. It's partly because. Of how dearly. He loves him. We saw that just above. Timothy. Is like his best friend. And even more than that.

Timothy. Has been his. Comrade. In the trenches. His fellow soldier. In the good fight. His close companion. In their travels.

His co-worker. In all their labors. And projects together. And even more. As Paul said. Just a moment ago. His beloved son. So Timothy. Is as precious.

And dear to Paul. As a son. So that's at least. One reason. To be thinking. About Timothy. So much. But there's another reason. A big reason.

And it's kind of. It's kind of hiding. Beneath the surface. We're going to get to that. In a minute. Before we do. Let's look at what else. Paul has to say here. In this.

[15:01] First. Couple verses. What has Paul. Been thinking about. As he. Offers his thanks. To God. For Timothy. There's one.

Particular moment. That's been. Replaying itself. In Paul's. Mind. He seems to be. Remembering it. Again. And again.

He says. Recalling. Your tears. I long to see you. So that I may be. Filled with joy. What is this all about? What tears?

Well. We actually. Don't know. Exactly. What the story is. Behind these tears. But it's probably. A reference. To the last time. That Paul. Saw Timothy.

Face to face. It's possible. That this is a reference. To what Luke describes. In Acts chapter 20. When Paul meets. With the leaders. From the church of Ephesus.

[15:57] On his way. Back to Jerusalem. If you know the story. Paul told all of those. Leaders there. From Ephesus. Of which Timothy. Could be. Have been one of them. He told them. That they would never.

See his face again. And it says. They wept. They cried. It's like Paul was saying. This is goodbye. I don't think. I'm ever going to see.

You guys again. So that's possibly. What Paul is referring to here. Timothy's tears. But it's also possible. That these tears.

Refer to another occasion. Later on. Perhaps another. Emotional parting. Or perhaps. Even Paul's. Own. Troublesome situation.

Has something to do. With Timothy's tears. At their last meeting. So let's. Let the cat out of the bag. Where is Paul right now? What's going on with him.

[16:51] As he writes this letter. Why is he remembering. The tears of Timothy. Why does he so long. To see. Timothy. What is he. Thinking about Timothy.

So constantly. For. Why does Paul say. At the start of all this. That he serves God. With a clear. Conscience. It's because. Of Paul's.

Troublesome. Situation. And to see this. We have to look ahead. A little bit. To some of the things. Paul says. In this letter. We're just going to skim through. A couple passages. Really quickly here. A couple verses.

In this. In the same letter. So we just look down. The page a little bit. To verse 8. Paul says. Do not be ashamed. Of the testimony. About our Lord. Or of me.

His prisoner. Rather join with me. In suffering. For the gospel. So by Paul's own words. He's suffering. Right now. And he is a prisoner.

[17:48] Just a little bit down. In verse 11. We read this. Of this gospel. I was appointed a herald. And an apostle. And a teacher. That is why I am suffering.

As I am. So Paul has been imprisoned. Because of his teaching. And preaching. About Jesus. We go down a little bit further.

Into verse 15. Paul writes this. He says. Timothy. You know that everyone. In the province of Asia. Has deserted me. Including Phagellus. And Hermogenes. May the Lord show mercy.

To the household. Of Onesephorus. Because he often. Refreshed me. And was not. Ashamed. Of my chains. So Paul is.

In Rome. But he is. Alone. He's been deserted. By some. It seems that many. Are ashamed. Of his chains.

[18:44] So not only. Is he a prisoner. But. But many. Of the believers. Have now been. Distancing themselves. From Paul. Because he's in jail. Because. In the eyes of many.

He's a convicted criminal. Down a little bit further. Into chapter 2. Verse 8. Paul writes this. He says. Remember Jesus Christ. Raised from the dead.

Descended from David. This is my gospel. For which I am suffering. Even to the point. Of being chained. Like a criminal. So Paul is not.

Enjoying the freedom. To teach and preach. Like he had. The first time. That he was under. House arrest. In Rome. In Acts 28. When he was awaiting.

His. His opportunity. To stand before. Caesar. This time. He's in chains. He's under guard. And it feels. Like. Suffering.

[19:44] Now let's look. Towards the end. Of the letter. Chapter 4. Verse 6. Paul says. I am already.

Being poured out. Like a drink offering. And the time. For my departure. Is near. I have fought. The good fight. I have finished. The race. I have kept. The faith.

Now there is. In store for me. The crown of righteousness. Which the Lord. The righteous judge. Will award to me. On that day. Sounds like Paul knows. That his days. Are numbered. That he's near the end. That it's just a matter of time. Finally. We look to the very end. Of the letter. Chapter 4.

Verse 16. Paul writes this. To Timothy. He says. At my first defense. No one. Came to my support. But everyone. Deserted me. May it not be held.

[20 : 38] Against them. But the Lord. Stood at my side. And gave me strength. So Paul. It seems. Has already had. One hearing. One trial.

And all the believers. Who were with him. They deserted him. They were afraid. Of the consequences. Of standing with Paul. Perhaps they didn't even. Go to the trial. And so Paul. Stood alone. Except. Jesus. Who stood with him. Says Paul. And gave him strength. Suddenly. This first part. Of the letter. Makes a whole lot more sense.

Doesn't it? Why does Paul say. That he serves God. With a clear. Conscience. Well. It's because right now. He's being treated. As a criminal. As if he's guilty.

And it's not just Rome. But it's other believers. Believers. Who have deserted him. And are ashamed. Of his chains. Paul's saying. I know. That I've done nothing wrong.

[21 : 35] I've done nothing. To deserve all this. I've been serving God. My conscience is clear. And why is he remembering. The tears. Of Timothy. Why does he so long.

To see. Timothy. Why is he thinking. About Timothy. So constantly. Day. And night. Well. Right now. He's. Alone. He's chained up.

In a jail cell. Abandoned. By the believers. Who were with him. He's got nothing. To do. Except sit there. And think. And pray. And he's probably. Not sleeping too well.

Chained up in his jail cell. And so probably. Paul wasn't kidding. When he said. Day and night. I've been thinking. About you. Timothy. I've been thanking. God for you. And if Paul knows. That his death. Is coming soon. And his days. Are numbered. Now it makes sense. Why he so longs. To see Timothy. His dearly loved. Son.

[22 : 32] In the faith. Would you want to see. Your own children. One last time. Before you die. Would you want to see. Those you love. The most.

One last time. Paul says. I long to see you. So that I may be. Filled with joy. My last memory. Of you. Timothy. Was. Your tears.

That day. We. We parted ways. But now. Remember. Paul's main point here. Not just that he's. Remembering Timothy.

But that he's been. Thanking God. For Timothy. And there's something. Very specific here. That Paul is thankful. To God for. About Timothy. We see it. In verse.

Five. He says. I thank my God. As I constantly. Remember you. In my prayers. I'm reminded. Of your sincere. Faith. I'm persuaded.

[23 : 30] That that faith. That first lived. In your grandmother. And your mother. Now lives. In you. Also. This is what Paul. Has been thanking God.

For about Timothy. I'm thankful. For your faith. Timothy. And notice. What kind of faith. Your sincere.

Faith. Why that word? Could it be. That in all this time. As it's becoming. Less and less popular. To. To be associated.

With Paul. And the gospel. And people. Are deserting. Paul. And it's becoming. Dangerous. Even to. To. Proclaim.

The name of Jesus. Could it be. That the faith. Of many. Is being revealed. As insincere. Superficial. Shallow. They're falling away.

[24 : 23] But Paul says. I know. That the faith. That you have. Timothy. Is the real deal. It's genuine. Just like it was.

In your grandmother. And in your mother. I'm persuaded. That that same faith. Lives. In you. Timothy. And so. I'm thanking God. For you.

This is how Paul. Begins this letter. To Timothy. Timothy. And as we'll see. In the weeks ahead. This letter. Is wonderful. Not only. Do we get to. Take to ourselves. All of the encouragement. That Paul gives. To Timothy. But we also. Get to read. And hear. Some of Paul's. Last words. The things that he said. At the very end. Of his life.

We get to hear. About how. Paul. This beloved apostle. Approaches. His own death. And I want to tell you. It's utterly. Inspiring.

[25 : 20] It's so encouraging. So that's what's coming. Not next Sunday. But the following Sundays. We got the mission Sunday. Next Sunday. We're going to move now.

Into the Lord's table. And as promised. Let's look back up. To the way. That Paul started this letter. Let's answer that question. We asked right at the beginning.

Paul introduced himself there. As an apostle. Of Christ Jesus. By the will of God. In keeping with the promise. Of life. That is in Christ.

Jesus. Why highlight this particular aspect. Of the gospel. That Jesus has made. A promise. Of life. I think the answer is. Because Paul is staring his own death. In the face. He knows it's coming. His days are numbered.

[26 : 15] And so what is Paul holding on to. In his jail cell. Where he sits. Chained as a prisoner. Waiting for that final hearing. That final sentence of death.

He's holding on to this. That there is in Jesus. A promise. Of life. And not just any life. But life after death.

Life despite death. We're talking eternal life. That's what Jesus promised. To those who believed in him. And that's what Paul's been proclaiming.

All over the world. And that's what Paul's been thinking about a lot. As his time draws near. Jesus' promise of life.

Do you know. That just like for Paul. Eventually your time will come too. Death comes to all of us.

[27 : 14] As it says in Hebrews. Chapter 9. Verse 27. People are destined. To die once. And after that. To face judgment.

And no one but God knows when. Or how. Your time will come. Are you ready to meet him?

Are you ready to stand before the Lord? The Bible says that all of us have sinned against God. All of us have the status of guilty before him.

But because God is merciful. And loving. He has made a way. For us to be saved.

From the punishment that we deserve. And because God is merciful and loving. He sent that way. His son Jesus. Into our world.

[28 : 11] And through Jesus. He offers to us. The promise. Of life. As we come to the Lord's table. We're reminded. That our salvation.

Has a cost. Our forgiveness has a cost. It was offered freely. It is offered freely to us. But it came at the cost of the suffering.

And death. Of God's own son. And so we have on the table here. We have bread. And we have the cup. And these things are symbols.

They represent Jesus. Body. And blood. Ultimately they both point to his death.

That night before Jesus died. He broke the bread. And he passed it out. He gave it to his disciples.

He told them to each take a piece and eat. And he passed around his cup.

[29 : 12] And he told them to drink of it. All of them. And to do that in remembrance of him. And then the next day his body was broken.

And his blood was poured out. When he died on the cross. He did that to atone for our sins. So that we could be forgiven. And reconciled to God.

The promise of life required this. It required that our sins be dealt with. It required that we be restored in our relationship to God.

Only then could we have this gift of life forever with God. Eternal life that Jesus promised. And so I want to ask you this morning.

Have you trusted in Jesus' promise of life? Have you repented of your sins? Have you confessed them to God?

[30 : 17] Have you asked for his forgiveness? Have you believed in his atoning sacrifice on the cross for you?

If so. This table is for you. And we're going to partake of it. And remember together. This is a table that speaks of God's love for us.

We're going to take a few moments now just to reflect. And to pray quietly. I want to encourage you in these moments to talk to God.

In the quiet of your heart. After a few minutes. We'll have. Rod and Dave.

Come forward and pass out the bread and the cup. If you have not surrendered your heart to Jesus. Then please abstain from partaking. You can just indicate with your hand.

[31 : 16] And the servers will pass you by. We'll wait until everybody who wishes to partake has been served. And then I'll pray. And we'll eat and drink together. In unison.

Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Let's hear the promise one more time from Jesus' own words. Very truly, I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

Very truly I tell you a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

[35 : 40] Lord Jesus, thank you for your promise of life. Thank you that you came down from heaven and that you died on that cross to save us and to open up the way for us to the Father.

Thank you for your love. I pray that our hearts would know it deeply as we remember you.

To your name be the glory. Amen. Amen. I pray that we are all for you. Amen.