

(2) ...by following Paul's example

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: 27 July 2008

Preacher: Nat Charles

[0:00] Our reading this morning is from 2 Timothy, starting at chapter 1 and verse 1, and that's found on page 1197 of the Bibles.

So 2 Timothy 1.1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelled first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

[1:15] Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do.

But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Homogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Anisiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

But when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me earnestly and found me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And you well know all the surface he rendered at Ephesus.

[2:52] Thanks, Matt, for reading very much. Good morning. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Nat Charles. I'm a member of the church family here at Grace Church.

We're continuing our summer series this morning in 2 Timothy, chapter 1. So please keep your Bibles open, page 1197. And having looked at verses 1 to 8 of chapter 1 last week, we'll be looking at verses 8 to 18 today.

Simon's prayed for us, so let's dive in. Now, I'm told by friends who know about such things, that in education, children learn most effectively when they can see and observe in practice what they are learning about as they read and listen.

So when something is observable and a child can watch something work itself out in practice, that is apparently one of the most effective methods of teaching and learning.

Seeing and observing can be as useful as hearing and reading. We saw last week in our first look at 2 Timothy, that verse 8 is right at the heart of chapter 1.

[4:07] Let me read verse 8 again. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

So then everything else that we see in chapter 1 is building towards helping Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel, but to endure suffering for it as a godly leader.

The question is, though, where is the working example for Timothy? Where will he see verse 8 lived out so that he can better understand what it means to suffer for the gospel?

Well, in these next 10 verses, verses 8 to 18, Paul points to his own example for Timothy to see what godly leadership looks like. In fact, through the whole chapter, through all of chapter 1, Paul is pointing to himself so that Timothy will be able to see what unashamed ministry looks like.

A quick count that I did revealed that in the 18 verses of chapter 1, Paul says, I, me, or my, about 25 times. So like in verses 11 and 12, for example, where he says, For which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do.

[5 : 26] But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able. Or on to verse 13, Paul tells Timothy to follow the pattern of sound words that he's heard from Paul.

So to encourage Timothy to suffer for the gospel and not be ashamed, Paul says, Look at me. Look at me. Look at me to see what that looks like and how it works.

So Timothy will see what unashamed ministry looks like in the life of his friends and his spiritual father, the apostle Paul. But it's not only Timothy who will learn from Paul's example.

The whole church will too. Paul clearly expected this letter to be read by the whole church. It's a personal letter, but not a private letter.

Chapter 4, verse 22 makes that clear. As Paul finishes the letter, He says, The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. That you there, that the last word is a plural you.

[6 : 30] You meaning everyone. So Paul expects that Timothy will learn from his example. But he expects too that the whole church will learn from his example.

And that the whole church will encourage and expect Timothy to follow the pattern that Paul lays down in life and godliness. So as we look through these verses this morning, let's be thinking about how we pray for and encourage and expect our leaders to follow Paul's example.

Well, as we look at that example this morning, we're going to see three things. There's an outline, I think, on the back of the service sheets. You might find that useful to follow through.

But we're going to see three things. Firstly, in verses 8 to 12, the gospel that Paul is not ashamed of. Then in verses 13 and 14, the pattern of unashamed ministry.

And then verses 15 to 18, the example of the friend who is not ashamed of Paul. Well, let's start then with the gospel that Paul is not ashamed of in verses 8 to 12.

[7 : 43] And let me read verses 8 to 12 again. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

He saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which has been manifested through the appearing of our saviour Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do.

But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. So then we've seen through chapter 1 that Paul has been encouraging Timothy to not be ashamed of the gospel, but to suffer for it.

And he goes on in verse 12 to say that he himself has not been ashamed of the gospel. So what Paul says then between verses 8 and 12 helps us to see why it is that he has not been ashamed of the gospel, and how that encourages Timothy to do the same.

There are two things that Paul tells Timothy in these verses about why he's not been ashamed of the gospel. Firstly, in verses 9 and 10, that he's not ashamed of the gospel because the gospel is worth suffering for.

[9 : 04] And secondly, in verse 12, he's not ashamed of the gospel because God can be trusted for the future. In verses 9 and 10, Paul doesn't so much tell Timothy that he's not ashamed of the gospel, but as he lays out the gospel before Timothy's eyes, Paul is showing Timothy that he's not ashamed of the gospel because this is a gospel worth suffering for.

The way that Paul describes the gospel in these verses is intended to help Timothy see that this is a gospel worth suffering for. So have a look at verse 9 and how Paul begins to describe the gospel with that wonderful reminder that the gospel is a gospel of grace.

That God saves and rescues his people, not because his people deserve it or merit it, but because that is what he is like. God is kind to his people because that is what he is like.

He doesn't treat his people as their sins deserve, but he treats them with grace and saves and redeems his people because that is the kind of God that he is. He doesn't work on a system of

performance and rewards.

He doesn't save his people because they can earn it or deserve it, but because he is kind. God saves his people because of his own purpose and grace, not because of the works of his people, not because we can earn favour with God or work our way into his good books.

[10 : 36] And that grace, that kindness towards his people has been planned from before the ages began, verse 9. If you've been part of a Grace Church home group over the last year, I hope you've enjoyed as much as I have doing an overview of the whole Bible, working through it sort of week by week.

It's just been brilliant, hasn't it, to see how God has worked his purposes out from the beginning of time and what God intends for his creation. And Paul reminds Timothy that God's great plan of salvation isn't an afterthought.

It's not cobbled together after his good creation went wrong. No, God was kind and gracious to his people in Jesus before there even was a creation, before the ages had started and we had time to measure them by.

In the past, before the ages began, God was kind to his people in Jesus. Now that's just an astonishing thing to say, isn't it?

It almost defies the very concepts that we work with in terms of time and thinking about time and how the ages sort of progress. But Paul says it nonetheless.

[11 : 54] Before the ages began, God was gracious and kind to his people. Then, in verse 10, that grace now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

God's grace isn't some sort of abstract concept, a nice idea that never quite got off the ground. No, when Jesus appeared in human form, he showed us what God is like.

He showed us that God is kind and gracious. And he showed us that ultimately as he dies in our place, as he rises to new life, and in doing so, he abolishes death for us and brings life and immortality to light.

This is what the Gospel is like. We see God's character revealed through it and ultimately, we are made right with him through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Richard Dawkins, in his book *The God's Illusion*, claims that if he existed and chose to reveal it, God himself could noisily and unequivocally clinch the argument in his favour.

[13 : 16] Well, Paul tells Timothy here that God has done precisely that in Jesus. He has revealed himself to his creation, to his world, he has noisily and unequivocally proved himself.

And wonderfully, the Gospel is so much more than God merely revealing himself, as if all he's doing is, as if all he's interested in is scoring points with Richard Dawkins.

He's done so much more in Jesus than merely prove his existence. He's abolished death. He's brought life and immortality to light. He's achieved all of his plans and purposes through the cross. As Jesus brings life and immortality to light, as he redeems and saves God's people. What a wonderful Gospel. What a wonderful God.

No wonder the Psalmist writes in Psalm 86, there is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. This is a Gospel, Timothy, that is worth suffering for.

[14 : 26] Well, that's the first thing that Paul says about why it is that he's not ashamed of the Gospel, because it's worth suffering for. That's not the only reason he gives for not being ashamed of it. The eagle-eyed amongst us would have noticed in verse 12 that Paul says, I am not ashamed for or because I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

So the reason that Paul has not been ashamed of the Gospel is that God can be trusted for the future. He will guard until that day what has been entrusted to Paul.

He, ultimately, God, will guard the Gospel. And all that Paul has said in verses 9 and 10 helped Timothy to see why God can be trusted as he guards the Gospel.

So verses 9 and 10 don't only show that the Gospel is worth suffering for, but they help Timothy to see that God is trustworthy for the future because of all that he has done in the past and the present.

So the God whom Paul has believed in verse 12 is the God who has done all that we have seen in verses 9 and 10. So of course this God is utterly trustworthy and can be trusted for the future because he's shown us what he's like in the past and the present.

[15 : 54] Because of all that he has done we know that he can be trusted for the future. I guess the question is, though, how does knowing that God is trustworthy for the future helped Timothy suffer for the Gospel in the present?

Well, it helps Timothy to have the future in focus because knowing that the future is certain gives him a reason to keep going in the present. So knowing that God will bring about all that he has promised to do in the Gospel helps him to keep going now.

So knowing that God will bring about his wonderful new creation knowing that God will judge the world and get rid of sin and evil that he will get rid of suffering and pain that he will complete what he has had planned since before the creation of the world well that helps Timothy to keep going. God is trustworthy and he will do these things. So be encouraged, Timothy. We know what the future is so keep going. I don't know how many of you have seen the Lord of the Rings trilogy. If you manage to stay awake long enough in the third film you'll have heard this conversation that took place between Pippin the Hobbit and Gandalf the Wizards just as it looks like the city of Minas Tirith the city of the good people in the film is about to be overthrown.

[17 : 25] Pippin is losing hearts he thinks he's on the losing team and he's losing hearts so he turns to Gandalf and he says I didn't think it would end this way and Gandalf says end no the journey doesn't end here death is just another path one that we must all take the grey rain curtain of this world rolls back and all turns to silver and glass and then you see it.

what Gandalf says Pippin see what and Gandalf says white shores and beyond a far green country under a swift sunrise Pippin says well that isn't so bad and Gandalf says no no it isn't and you see knowing what the end is and knowing that that end is certain means that Pippin can fight on in the present even when everything looks like it's going to end badly even when it looks like good will perish he can keep going because he knows what the end is he can carry on so says Paul suffer for the gospel Timothy as I have done because the gospel is worth it and because God is trustworthy it's not a mistake to suffer and fight the temptation to be ashamed of the gospel however much it may feel like it it's worth it it's not a mistake to keep going even when humanly speaking things look bad because we know who has the future it's worth it

Timothy keep going well that's the gospel that Paul is not ashamed of by his example Timothy also sees a pattern of what unashamed ministry looks like in verses 13 and 14 let me read those verses again follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us guard the good deposits entrusted to you and the pattern of unashamed ministry is this that Timothy must follow the pattern of sound words that he's heard from Paul and as he does that he must guard the good deposit that's been entrusted to him he must guard the gospel as with last week's talk do notice that Timothy is equipped to do these things by God he's not struggling in his own strength he's to do these things in God's strength in the faith and love that are in

Christ Jesus in verse 13 and by the Holy Spirit in verse 14 so that in God's strength and as Paul has done and exemplifies to him Timothy must follow the pattern of sound words that Paul has laid down for him so that same gospel that Timothy heard from his mother and his grandmother in chapter 1 verse 5 that same gospel that Paul taught him about and encouraged him in is the same gospel that Timothy himself must hold fast to and follow so Timothy is not free to change the words of the gospel that he's heard from Paul he's not free he's not at liberty to change the content of the gospel he's not free to define for himself what the content of the gospel is because the gospel is far too important for that isn't it the gospel is God's power for salvation it's the only way for man to be right with God and therefore it's far too important to be changed however much pressure there is to do so so the godly

Christian leader will follow Paul's example of passing on the gospel as we said last week there are a number of bishops in the Anglican communion at the moment who are making a stand for the gospel who are living out what it means to follow the pattern of sound words as the content of the gospel is debated within the Anglican church at the moment now one response to those faithful bishops I don't know whether you've read any of the press coverage or whether any of your friends have said something like this but one response to those faithful bishops has been to say that actually all that they are doing is merely arguing over words they're just arguing over words and doctrine and they shouldn't actually be wasting their time doing those things but they should be doing more useful things instead doing things like tackling climate change or coming up with ideas about how to deal with world poverty or to help the poor in other words the charge is that there are

much more valuable things to be doing with their time rather than simply wasting time by arguing over words

[22 : 20] I don't know what you make of that argument but Paul is clear here isn't he he's absolutely crystal clear that words matter he's clear that the content of the gospel isn't up for grabs for whoever can shout the loudest it's far too important for that godly Christian leaders such as Timothy will follow Paul's example as they follow the pattern of the gospel that Paul lays out so clearly that is what an unashamed ministry will look like and that means doesn't it that when people do try to change the content of the gospel however they might dress up the language well they do it because they are at heart ashamed of it now whether they are bishops or church leaders or theologians part of the reason why people change the gospel is because they're ashamed of it they don't like what it has to say about living a redeemed

Christian life or what it says about the nature of Jesus' death on the cross and the atonements when church leaders start changing the gospel they do it partly because they are ashamed of it but Paul says don't be ashamed of the gospel follow the pattern of sound words and as you do that guard the gospel now that language of guarding for us usually conjures up images of beef eaters standing outside the Tower of London and the crown jewels hidden away in a dark room in the basement but as we go through the letter we'll see that when Paul talks about guarding the gospel he doesn't mean hiding the gospel away putting it under lock and key so that no one can get near it and tamper with it no the way that Timothy is to guard the gospel is to put it on public display he's to display the gospel to the world to publicly proclaim it and defend it so the way to guard the gospel for Timothy is to put it on display and to correct those who claim that the gospel is something different from the pattern of sound words that Paul gave to him so what does unashamed ministry look like well it looks like holding to the gospel following the pattern of sound words and putting it on display holding it up for all the world to see so then we've seen

Paul encourage Timothy with his own example as he's reminded him of the gospel that he's not ashamed of and encouraged him in the pattern of unashamed ministry the final example that Paul wants to share with Timothy to encourage him is the example of his friends in verses 15 to 18 the example of Onesiphorus this is our final point this morning and more briefly that Timothy should imitate the example of the friend not ashamed of Paul let me read verses 15 to 18 again very quickly you are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me among whom are Phygelus and Homogenes may the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains but when he arrived in Rome he searched me earnestly and found me may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus so then in these verses

Paul holds up two examples of how different friends have reacted to his trial and imprisonment so on the one hand there are a group of people typified by Phygelus and Homogenes in verse 15 and this group of friends have turned away from Paul they've deserted him in verse 16 they are contrasted with Onesiphorus who notably was not ashamed of Paul's chains so at least part of the reason that Phygelus and Homogenes have abandoned Paul is that they're ashamed they're ashamed of him they're ashamed of his chains of his ministry they are ultimately ashamed of the gospel that Paul is preaching and imprisoned for Paul they don't really want to be associated with a prisoner with a criminal with a man who is on trial for his life as Paul is and after all how does a condemned man commend the gospel and the

Lord Jesus that's not the sort of person to be followed surely the contrast with Anisiphorus couldn't be clearer could it in verses 16 and 17 so Anisiphorus doesn't desert Paul but actively seeks him out while he's imprisoned and takes care of him and refreshes him who provides him with food and drink and clothes and all the sorts of things that a Roman prisoner couldn't expect the prison to provide it's a hugely costly thing to do for Anisiphorus but he does it because he is not ashamed of the gospel that Paul is preaching he's not ashamed of Paul he's not ashamed of his situation and ultimately is not ashamed of the gospel so as Paul holds up these two examples before Timothy it's just clear who he should be emulating follow the godly attitude of Anisiphorus so then

[28 : 03] Paul's example to Timothy in chapter one of 2 Timothy this is a gospel Timothy not to be ashamed of this is the pattern of unashamed ministry and imitate the attitude of Anisiphorus who is not ashamed of the gospel just finally then how do some of these things apply to us as with last week we've seen haven't we more of what it means to be a godly leader we've seen that being a godly leader means to follow Paul with his gospel and with his pattern of ministry so that's what we

should expect of our church leaders that's how we know which leaders are the ones that we should be listening to and following and being led by so there's that application to church leaders follow Paul and to us as a church family and we decide and think about who we should be led by so we've seen more too in terms of what our prayer life should look like as we pray for our leaders both corporately and individually let's be praying for our leaders here at

Grace Church that they would continue to follow the pattern that Paul lays down that they would continue to rejoice in the wonderful gospel of grace and that they would be unashamed as they do so let's be praying for them I think there's a third area of application to mention too and that's to all those people here at Grace Church who are involved in putting the gospel on display every week who are working hard to make sure that they are following the pattern of sound words that's exactly what's happening week by week at Grace Church in Sunday school and in our home groups the gospel is being put on display publicly so there's an application here for Sunday school for home group leaders too that we need to keep working hard putting the gospel on display and we need to keep doing it because the gospel is worth it and because we are confident about the future because we know that God is trustworthy so when we find that leading that the leading we're doing is really costly and is really hard let's keep going confident that the gospel is worth it and confident in the God whose gospel it is why don't we pray to close share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God he saved us and called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began heavenly father we praise you for your gospel of grace we praise you for your goodness and kindness and father we pray that your gospel of grace would continue to grip our own church leaders here at grace church we pray that simon and mark and judy would continue to be gripped by the gospel of grace and we consider the gospel worth suffering for and father we pray that too for all of those faithful bishops at the lambeth conference at the moment who are seeking to follow the pattern of words laid down by the apostle paul father please would you help them to keep going rejoicing in the gospel and rejoicing in you knowing that you are trustworthy for the future we pray these things in jesus name amen