

# Immortality

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] for a short time to 2 Timothy chapter 1, and especially verses 8 to 10. So we begin reading at verse 8.

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 Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And that's one long sentence, very closely together, the words of it closely connected together in that one wonderful sentence.

And that's what makes it so difficult sometimes just to take passages from Paul's writings and look at any specific verse or phrase even, because they're so closely bound up together, all of these phrases and verses that you find there.

We really wanted to look today at what's there in verse 10 especially, how the appearing of Jesus Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, particularly the death and especially the resurrection of Jesus as triumphant over death.

[ 1 : 32 ] But it's impossible to reach that without taking these other words from verse 8 with you, where Paul engages firstly in an appeal, an appeal to share with him in the testimony of the Lord and share especially in suffering for the gospel, as he himself is at that time.

Because this letter is the last of Paul's letters, the last to be written by the Apostle Paul. And he wrote it when in prison, for the second time in prison in Rome.

We don't know what led to that. We're not sure of the circumstances, but it's obvious that's what his circumstances were, as he wrote this final letter in his career as an apostle and to Timothy that he loved so much as a preacher of the gospel and someone that he had such a regard for.

So he's in prison. The first part of his trial, if you like, is over. There was a preliminary examination. If you look at chapter 4 and verse 16, you'll see there that he speaks there about, at my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me, may it not be charged against them. And that seems to refer to the first part in the Roman system of the judiciary and these things. There was, first of all, a preliminary hearing.

[ 3 : 03 ] And then that would be followed if required by the actual trial, which is what Paul was waiting for at this stage. And it's very solemn and it's very poignant.

It's emotional to read through this letter and realize that Paul is expecting that he will not survive this. He's expecting that he will be put to death.

That will be the outcome of his trial, which is why he says what he says in chapter 4 and verses 6 to 8. I am ready. I'm already being poured out as a drink offering.

The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.

And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing. So there, from the depths of prison in Rome, Paul is writing these wonderful words of encouragement to Timothy, who is still facing false teaching in Ephesus, false teaching that's mentioned a number of times in the New Testament.

[ 4 : 10 ] And Paul is actually setting out for him here in his last letter how he must face that and how he must deal with that and keep himself at the same time.

So we're looking firstly at this appeal and then this appearance that he mentions, the appearance of Christ. First of all, he's got an appeal to Timothy, an appeal to us as Christians indeed, in regard to

what he says there in verses 8 and 9.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, literally the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

What is this language he's using? He's saying, do not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or of me his prisoner, but instead share in the suffering.

And you can see there's a balance there on the one that he's saying, don't be ashamed of my situation. Don't be ashamed of the gospel. Don't be ashamed of suffering for the gospel.

[ 5 : 14 ] Instead, share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. Don't be ashamed of it. Don't draw back from it. Because this word, be ashamed, and the way Paul is putting it here is not suggesting that Timothy is ashamed of the gospel or is ashamed to suffer for the gospel.

What he's really saying is, don't let that be the case. Don't start like that. Don't start being ashamed of suffering for the gospel. And he calls here the testimony about our Lord.

He's saying, don't be ashamed. Don't begin to be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. And what is that? Well, that's really essentially the testimony of Christ himself, who he is and what he is about and what he did and what he came into the world to do.

Remember, Jesus himself in the gospel of Mark, chapter 8, verse 38, speaks about those who are ashamed of me and of my words, is how he puts it. Really, essentially, that's what Paul is saying here to Timothy.

Don't be ashamed of Christ or his words, Christ or his testimony. He says, don't be ashamed of me. This great message about Jesus that is central to the gospel and foundational to a Christian life.

[ 6 : 26 ] He's saying, don't begin to be ashamed of that. Now, ashamed in the sense of it in the New Testament is more than just to feel embarrassed about something. We use the word ashamed in that ordinary sense.

Perhaps most often when we're ashamed of something we're somewhat embarrassed about. It's something that we aren't very ready to admit or something that we don't want to talk about or something that's really embarrassing to us.

We're ashamed of it. But it's deeper than that with Paul because to be ashamed in this sense, to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, to be ashamed of the gospel, of what the gospel is about, what the gospel entails, is it includes also to draw back from being committed to the gospel.

Because being ashamed means you take a step back. You don't go through with all that's required. What he's saying to Timothy is, don't actually start to draw back.

Don't start to slacken. Don't lessen off your commitment. Don't be put off from the work that you're doing because there's going to be some suffering involved, even more suffering involved for you.

[ 7 : 36 ] That's what he's saying in don't be ashamed about the testimony of the Lord. Don't be ashamed in the sense of don't slacken your commitment. Don't draw back from, don't step back from what you're actually doing.

And that, of course, is true for us as well because the more we actually know what it is to suffer for the Lord, and let's face it, we're usually, most of us, not in a position to suffer for following Jesus, for believing in Jesus the way our fellow Christians in the world are.

Just look at the situation in Sri Lanka where that devastating series of bombings have taken the life of, I don't know, nearly 200 people. It is now 160-something people.

What was that about? That was just because they were celebrating Easter in churches or because of hotels that were associated with the West, the Western world. That's what these people are facing as Christians in those churches on a daily basis.

That's the kind of thing they fear. Here, you and I today gathering a Stornway Free Church. We don't have to worry about that. We don't have the fear of somebody actually coming in and with a devastating bomb obliterating many lives.

[ 8 : 50 ] God has given us, thankfully, peace, and we pray that it will continue because peace is important to the proclamation of the gospel, to the furtherance of the gospel.

And here is Timothy being given this admonition or given this warning or at least this advice by Paul. Well, don't be ashamed.

Don't begin to be ashamed about the testimony of the Lord or of me, his prisoner. Don't think that what's happened to me, he says, is in any way going to deflect from my commitment to the gospel. That's what Paul is saying. And he's advising Timothy likewise. But instead, he says, instead of being ashamed for the gospel, instead of stepping back and taking a lesser role or slackening your

commitment, he says, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. That's the alternative to being ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. Now, he's saying, instead of that, share in suffering for the gospel. And what he's saying is, share with me.

[ 9 : 57 ] Paul loves to use words where just with one word, he puts together something that we need a few words to actually explain or to set out.

And what he's saying is, share with me. This is where Paul is. He's in prison. He's writing from prison. Timothy knows that. Timothy knows that Paul is suffering, that Paul has suffered immensely for the gospel throughout his Christian life.

And here, as Paul is saying, instead of drawing back from committing yourself more to the gospel by what you hear about me as a prisoner, by my sufferings, or any sufferings that will come upon yourself, share in suffering.

We can translate it as something like, take your own share. Take your own share, your own portion of suffering for the gospel.

Now, what a challenge that is. That's a challenge that really affects every single one of us here today, myself included. Because the question then is asked of me, and it's asked of you, am I doing my bit?

[ 11 : 12 ] Am I sharing with all others who are suffering for the gospel? Am I taking on to myself the obedience and the commitment that I owe to Christ, that I owe to God, even if it means that I'm going to suffer for it, that I'm going to actually know something of the bite of the world, of the resistance of the world, of the antagonism of the world?

That's what Paul is really saying to Timothy here. Share in, not just the gospel, but share in the sufferings that are for the gospel.

Are you afraid today? This is something that is true of all of us to an extent. Are you afraid today to take a further step in your commitment to Jesus just because you think it might lead to some more difficulty or suffering in your life?

Are you afraid to be more open about your faith in Christ? Are you stepping back? Are you drawing back? Are you, in the sense of the word, ashamed, afraid to go further with developing your life as a Christian in relation to Jesus, in relation to discipleship, in relation to being committed to Him?

Well, He's saying to us here, the sufferings that are entailed in following Christ ought never to put us off from further developing our faith, our commitment to Him, our walk with Him, our public testimony to Him.

[ 12 : 43 ] Christ will take care of all the challenges that we face. Everybody here who has come to openly confess Jesus as Lord knows of the challenges that they face, knows the difficulties, but they also know and have a conviction that Christ has seen them through and Christ will see them through whatever else is entailed.

So don't be deflected. Don't be put off by the prospect of something that may yet come in your way for the testimony of the Lord. Take your own share.

Take up your portion of suffering for the gospel. We live in a world where such resistance as we have to the gospel is becoming increasingly common for that to become violent.

And it's becoming increasingly common through social media to have Christians denigrated, to have their name misrepresented, to have slander, to have all sorts of things thrown at them.

And we must never return that in kind. We must never actually do the same in response. We have to be prepared to still go on practicing our Christian life and still to go on openly confessing Christ as Lord, but to do so in the spirit of Christ.

[ 14 : 03 ] But that kind of thing must never put us off from committing ourselves further to the serving of Jesus, to a public profile being given to our faith.

Because he is worth everything that we need to put up with in order to promote his name. No one ever suffered like himself.

And he did that for our benefit, for our salvation. So here he is saying, here is Paul saying that this appeal, don't be ashamed, don't begin to be ashamed, don't be deflected from the testimony of our Lord or of me, his prisoner.

Don't let what you hear about me put you off from further commitment to your life as a Christian. But he says, share in the suffering. Take your own share for the gospel by the power of God who saved us.

Now we're skipping through this quickly. 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.

[15:07] Now Paul loves to do this. He loves to take us back to when there was no time, when there was no creation, before the creation, before God created all things, including human life.

Something happened. Something happened in eternity. God had his eye on his people. God had his eye on salvation. God had his plan in place. It's been there from all eternity. There's no beginning to it, strictly speaking.

This, he says, is the power, the purpose, and the grace of the Lord. The power, the grace, the purpose of God and salvation that came to be revealed in Jesus.

But he says, it was given to us. It was given to God's people before the world began. God had his eye on his people. God actually had in his own mind, in his own plan, this salvation actually given to his people in such a way that could not be reversed.

And Jesus came into the world to put that plan into effect. The architect of the plan is God himself.

[16:14] The one who carried out the plan and brought it to completion is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Paul is reminding us here of the wonder of our salvation, that it's not something that began in time.

It's not something that God decided to do when he created human beings. It's something that he had in place before the creation itself, before anything was made by him, before time began.

He gave us this purpose and grace in Christ Jesus before the ages began. And so his appeal carries through into this wonderful theology.

Just imagine today as a Christian what your life is connected with. Your life is connected with God's purpose and grace in Christ.

Where does that begin? It begins in himself. You didn't invent it. You didn't create it. I didn't create it. It's not an invention of the church. All the way through here, right through to the resurrection that he mentions, and Christ abolishing death and bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel.

[17:25] All of that stuff is ridiculed today. You'll find it so frequently on Facebook or social media or wherever else you find articles that are denigrating of the Christian faith.

You'll find that the Bible's described as the book of fairy stories or fables and ridiculed Christians for believing this stuff. Well, of course we believe this stuff.

How else could we go on? Where else is a basis? Is there a basis for hope? Look at the great things that need to exist in human experience. Hope. Justice. Justice.

Where are you going to find justice if these things aren't real about God, about Christ, about righteousness in Jesus, about Jesus returning as the judge of all the earth?

Where are all those who have been put to death for their faith, where are they going to find justice? Where are all the injustices in the world going to be answered and dealt with?

[18:22] Because if these things don't exist, if God doesn't exist, if there's no resurrection, there's no eternity. Atheism makes no sense.

There's no explanation whatsoever. We're accused by humanists or atheists or secularists very often of believing things that we just can't see or understand. Well, so do they.

And indeed, without believing in these things, we have no grounding for human life in any essential, spiritual, eternal sense.

Here is Paul saying, This is something he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior. So he's coming to talk about this appearance.

It's now been made visible, this purpose and grace of God in Christ for his people. How has it come to be made visible? It's come to be made visible in Jesus, in the coming of Christ, in the incarnation, and what followed on from that in Christ's ministry on earth, and his death and resurrection and ascension to glory.

[19:31] It's no accident that most of what assaults your mind with doubts about these things revolve actually around these great foundational matters of the Christian faith.

Why do people go to such lengths to try and ridicule the idea of resurrection from the dead? Because it's foundational to the hope of the Christian. That's why.

Because the devil knows that if he can destroy these foundational planks of the gospel, you have nothing left on which to build your life. That's why they're attacked so much.

That's why the Word of God, the Bible, is ridiculed the way it is. It's all part of the strategy and plan of darkness, of the evil one seeking to undermine your confidence in the Word of God, in the veracity and the truthfulness of God himself, and even his very existence.

So what is he saying about Jesus? Well, the appearing, you notice he's saying our Savior Christ Jesus. He's given him his full title there, the Savior, and he's also Christ Jesus.

[ 20 : 36 ] What does he say he did? He did two things. He abolished death, and he brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. First of all, he abolished death.

Now, that doesn't mean that death no longer exists. This word again in the New Testament, abolish, it doesn't mean just to get rid of altogether and so that it no longer exists. Of course, we know that can't be the case because death still exists.

There is still such a thing as death, not just physical death, but spiritual, eternal death. Hell still exists. People may actually try to convince us that that's another figment or invention of the church. No, the word abolish. It's used in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14 about what Jesus did to the devil.

He has abolished his power. He has abolished this evil figure in chapter 2 and verse 14 of Hebrews, the letter to Hebrews, where he says, he himself, Jesus, took part of the same, that's our flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil.

[ 21 : 56 ] Now, the word destroy there, exactly the same word in Greek as used here in 2 Timothy chapter 1, abolish. The devil still exists. Christ didn't destroy him in the sense of him no longer existing.

But what it means is to render ineffective or to render inoperable. What it's saying about death here is that the claim that death has over us, for Christians, that's gone.

I know our body still dies, but as we said to the children, there is such a thing as resurrection unto life for God's people. The bodies are still joined to Christ and share in Christ's triumph over death. They'll be raised incorruptible. They'll be raised immortal. And so what he's saying is that what Christ has done, particularly by his resurrection, when Jesus rose from the dead, he was virtually saying to his people, if you look into my grave where my body was buried, the emptiness of that grave confirms to you that I've abolished death for you, that I've taken out of death the sting, the penalty, the curse.

It's no longer relevant to Christians, to the saved people of God. It's rendered as if it didn't exist. It's for God's people an entrance to glory as far as their spirits are concerned, and in the resurrection their body will come to share in that resurrection, in that glory.

[ 23 : 37 ] He has abolished death. Friends, we're in this life so very familiar with death. Since I became your minister just over three years ago now, there have been 104 funerals from this congregation.

That's a lot of death. That reminds us that death is very real. That reminds us just what death is, what death does. It reminds us that death is a great spoiler, an interrupter of our peace, of family life, of things we value, of people we love.

They're taken from us. We can't get them back. It's an end of things as we know it in this life. Death is all of that. But death especially is separation from God.

That's the spiritual meaning of death. That's the biblical meaning of death. Separation is really at the heart of what death means. As you find body and soul separated in death in the physical sense, soul our death spiritually is our separation from God.

And that's essentially what you have to remember when you say that Jesus abolished death. He brought an end to our separation from God. He dealt with that separation so that we were reconciled to God by the death of Jesus.

[ 25 : 10 ] And in Christ's triumphant resurrection, it confirms that what he did in his death, God accepted, God approved of. And in his resurrection from the dead, Christ confirms to us that he has abolished death.

For God's people, he's rendered it no longer effective against them. There's nothing more important for you or for me than to share in Christ's triumph over death.

It transforms the grave for us. Because every Christian, everyone who's saved, can approach death and say, well, I know my body, if I die before Christ returns, I know my body is going to be buried in

the earth.

But I have comfort and I have confidence in knowing that my Lord was there and he's there no longer.

And that I shall share with him the triumph of his resurrection. Is that your hope? Can you say that of yourself today? You don't have to be a great theologian to say that.

[ 26 : 29 ] I'm not a great theologian. You don't have to really have the kind of insight into the meaning and teaching of God's Word that someone like the Apostle Paul had as he wrote to Timothy.

All you need is to trust in Christ, to be joined to Christ, to have your life in Jesus, by faith in him. That's what you come to possess. You come to share in his triumph. You come to share in his resurrection life. You come to share in what he himself has created for us.

That's what the next thing is. He brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Now, life and immortality are essentially the same thing. The life that Christ gives us is effectively immortality. But what does immortality mean? We sometimes use the word of our souls. We talk about our immortal souls in the sense that our souls don't die even when the body dies, the soul, or we go on living through our soul.

[ 27 : 31 ] Well, the Bible never uses immortal or immortality to describe the soul. That doesn't mean that we're wrong in thinking that our soul, or we go on living through our soul after death has taken place physically.

But immortal and immortality as here is always in the Bible associated with the resurrection of God's saved people or of God himself.

Because the word immortality or immortal really means essentially a life that's immune from death in all its forms. Or you could say a life into which death again can never enter.

That's to be immortal. I know it's used, isn't it, in common parlance, somebody that's achieved something wonderful, well, wonderful in human terms or worldly terms anyway.

Maybe some footballer or other has reached 500 goals or whatever. Well, he's achieved the ranks of immortality or he's scored a goal that's won the World Cup or whatever. He's now amongst the immortals.

[ 28 : 34 ] You know the way the word is used like that just to, in the sense of real fame or just upper echelons of human ability. But of course, that's not how it's used in the Bible.

It's used, as I said, of those who have the kind of life into which death again will never enter. That's why it's connected with resurrection. Because when you think about it, Adam, when he was created, before he fell, before he sinned, was not immortal.

He did not have a life into which death could never enter because he died. The moment he sinned, he died. He experienced that death of separation from God as well as physical death which awaited him.

And even the human nature of Christ, you couldn't describe us immortal in this sense of it until he was raised from the dead.

Because in the human nature of Christ, Christ in his human nature died. his body was laid in the sepulcher. Saw no corruption, yet still a dead body.

[ 29 : 44 ] Real, actual death. But when he was raised from the dead, in his human nature, he's then immortal. And that's the pattern for all of God's saved people.

Let me just take you back to where that is most tellingly set out in Scripture. We read from it for the children earlier in 1 Corinthians and chapter 15. And notice how carefully Paul actually uses the words here in 1 Corinthians 15.

He says, For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised, imperishable, we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. In other words, the resurrection of God's people from the dead is the putting on of immortality. It's the body then coming to put on the life or to share in the life that will never again be subject to death.

On the other side of the resurrection for Jesus, for Jesus in his human nature, death no longer exists for him. He will never die again.

[ 31 : 02 ] He will never have to. And the same is true of God's redeemed people. When they are raised, when their bodies are raised from the dead, from the graves, no longer will death in any way enter into their experience.

That body is immune from death because that person is immortal, and that body is immortal. It's no longer subject to death.

You see, it's saying here in 1 Corinthians 15, where we read, when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that it's written, death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O grave, where is your sting? You see, it's saying then, and not till then, we become immortal through resurrection unto life.

We are mortal up to that point, but we put on immortality. and then he's finishing by saying through the gospel.

[ 32 : 13 ] He brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Why does he add through the gospel? Isn't it in the person of Jesus himself that life and immortality has been brought to light, has been brought out to be made visible for us by his resurrection?

Yes, but isn't that the gospel? That is the gospel. Christ is at the heart of the gospel. Christ indeed is the gospel. What is the good news of God?

What is the gospel, the good news? It is, here is life and immortality in this person, in this Jesus, in this Christ, in this Savior, as Paul calls him, the Savior, Christ Jesus.

It's the gospel that pronounces this life, that appeals to you to take this Christ, to have this life, and that demonstrates the death and insists that death does not have the final say in human experience, or at least in the experience of God's saved people.

Well, what can we say in conclusion except that how great is Christ? How immense is Jesus?

[ 33 : 37 ] How important is he to our lives? Not only did he die the death we deserved, but he rose from the dead to bring life and immortality to light for us.

and all we need to share in that is to trust in him. May he bless to us his own word.

Let's conclude by singing in Psalm 16, Psalm number 16 to the tune Golden Hill. We're singing verses 8 to 11.

That's on page 17 in the Psalm books. Before me constantly I set the Lord alone. Because he is at my right hand I'll not be overthrown.

Therefore my heart is glad, my tongue with joy will sing, my body too will rest secure in hope unwavering. Verses 8 to 11 of Psalm 16.

[ 34 : 37 ] Amen. Before me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand I'll not be overthrown.

Therefore my heart heart is glad my tongue with joy will sing my body too will rest secure in hope unwavering for you for you will not allow my soul and death to stay nor will you be your holy holy one to see the tombs decay you have made known known to me the path of life divine the path of life divine they shall they shall

I know at your right hand joy from your face will shine shine I'll go to the side door to my right this morning and I make grace and mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us now and evermore Amen Amen