

2 Timothy 1 v 12

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read, 2 Timothy, chapter 1, in the words of, read verse 12, as Paul is talking about his suffering, 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.

I would imagine that any prisoner on death row would feel very different to any other prisoner in a particular prison, because I would imagine that all prisoners, unless somebody who is in death row, is looking, however far away it is in the future, they are looking to the day of the release.

But not so somebody who is in death row, somebody who has been condemned to death. And that is where Paul is. Paul is, as he writes here, he is on death row.

He had been in prison before, time he was in prison before, he had an element of freedom, this time he has none, and this time he is waiting for that sentence to be carried out.

And one of the amazing things, as we hear Paul writing here, is that we don't hear any complaint coming from him. This is a very personal letter. The other letters of Paul have tended to be written to churches, whereas here this is a personal letter that Paul is writing to this young man, Timothy.

[1 : 50] And what we find here with regard to Paul is, in keeping with all Pauline letters, is his great passion and his great love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because if any person had a reason to complain, you'd think it'd be Paul. Paul, from the time he had been converted, was somebody who lived with a single-minded determination to serve the Lord and to bring glory to his name, irrespective of what it cost and irrespective of what he was to suffer.

And the amazing thing is that Paul had suffered in a way that few have suffered, because every so often he would give us insights into his suffering.

You can read about it in Corinthians. He gives this catalogue of beatings and even stonings where he was left for dead. He suffered horrendously throughout his ministry and throughout his missionary journeys.

And here he is, having served the Lord faithfully and loyally all these years, is now in a dungeon and he is waiting for the executioner to come.

[3 : 07] And you would say to yourself, it'd be very easy, surely, to turn round and to complain before God and to say to the Lord, it's not fair. Lord, I've served you so faithfully.

I've given up so much. I've turned my back on everything simply to serve you. And this is what I'm getting. At no point ever does Paul even consider going down that road.

That's not in his thinking. Paul has got one aim and one view in mind, and that is the glory of God. He doesn't see things like that. And I would say that that's displaying something of the remarkable grace that is in the heart of the apostle.

Because he's a human, just like you and me. And we feel all these things. You know, that's part of our humanity. Even although grace works within us, there are times our humanity, the flesh, as it were, takes over.

And sometimes we can complain and grumble before God. But here's this man, Paul, and he's writing in just such a passionate way. And he's encouraging Timothy in the work.

[4 : 16] Now, again, it's quite remarkable because here's Paul, and he knows what's involved. He knows the suffering. He knows the pain. And he knows that it could very well bring death.

And yet he's saying to Timothy, come on, you take up the mantle. You carry on this work. There's no work like it. That's what Paul is saying. And that's what brings the reality, the burning reality of the gospel home to us.

Because, you know, it's all very well hearing people talk about faith. It's another thing to see people living faith. And that's one of the great things that we see in the life of the apostle Paul.

He lived that faith. In all the dark periods, in the black periods, in all the oppositions, in all the suffering, in all the temptations, all these things, he just pushed on and pushed on and pushed on. Because he believed 100% in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so he is encouraging Timothy in the work. [5 : 24] Of course, Paul had great affection for this young man, Timothy. And, you know, it's, in a sense, it's quite interesting when we see Paul. In a sense, it's like he's handing over the great gospel work to Timothy.

And when we read about Timothy, we see that he is a man who didn't keep well. He was a man who was very timid and shy and retiring by nature. And, you know, this, in a sense, shows the great difference between the way that the world would pick out a great successor and the way that the church would.

Because one of the things that the church has to learn is that it's not by might and it's not by power, but it's by my spirit. And if God's spirit is upon a person or upon a work, then that work will progress because it's God's work.

You could have the greatest orator in the world with the greatest gifts in the world, with the greatest management qualities in this world. And yet, no spiritual impact, no spiritual growth, no spiritual development.

But Paul knew that this man, Timothy, although he was shy, he was retiring, he had bad health and all these things. He was, had the, Paul could see he was like-minded to the apostle.

[6 : 43] And Paul believed that this is, this was a man who was to take over his mantle. And so he's encouraging Timothy in this work.

Now, Paul, of course, is, as we say, he's writing from prison. And he's writing to the apostle, writing, sorry, to Timothy, not to be ashamed.

He tells us himself in verse 12 that he is not ashamed. But back in verse 8, he says to Timothy, So you see what Paul is doing here.

He's saying to Timothy, look, don't be ashamed. Don't never be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm in prison because I love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wasn't in prison for any other reason but the fact that he loved the Lord Jesus Christ. And I would imagine for the majority of prisoners, unless they have very, very hard consciences, that the majority of prisoners must at some time or another feel shame as they reflect over why they're there and what they've done.

[8 : 02] I'm sure there's some prisoners who don't. They're very hard. But I'm sure many do as they reflect over their crimes and what they're there for. I'm sure many feel an element of shame.

And I'm sure even ourselves, as we visit the prison of our own mind and as we enter in, as we reflect into who we are, we know something of that shame about who we are and reflected in life. But the apostle is saying, look, I'm in prison because I love the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's no shame in that. Peter, writing elsewhere, said that we were never to be ashamed when we have to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so that's what Paul is trying to do. He's trying to encourage Timothy. And he says, look, it will look like a life of shame because there's a shame in the gospel. There's a stigma attached to following the Lord Jesus Christ.

People laugh at the Christian. People pour scorn at the Christian. People will take every opportunity to put the Christian down. That's a way of things. Still the same today.

[9 : 12] Maybe some of you, whether it's in school or at work or even in your own home, know what it's like. To have fun poked at you, where people won't miss a chance of putting a wee jibe in of just trying to hurt you because you love Jesus Christ.

For no other reason, there's a natural antagonism in the human heart against Christ. Paul says, it can be tough, but don't ever be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And tonight the Lord is saying through his word the same thing to us. Don't be ashamed. In other words, come out firmly and strongly on the side of Christ.

If you are here tonight as somebody that the Lord has worked in your heart, and yet you have never, as it were, been prepared to make that step or take that step, because you're afraid.

There is a deep-rooted fear within you of what people will say. We live in a small community. You say to yourself, if I was in Glasgow, if I was in Edinburgh, if I was in London, where I would be fairly anonymous, it would be a lot easier.

[10 : 38] But here everybody knows, and I'm not prepared for the flack I might get. I'm not prepared. I don't know how. How will I cope? And I believe that there are people who hold back for that very reason, because they're afraid of how their life will change, and people will change to them.

Because you look at their circle of friends, and you think, they're going to look at me differently. And you say, there are certain people I can't bear for them just to leave me in the lurch and to walk away.

Well, my friend, let me tell you, this church is full of people who have been in exactly that same position. And every person who is following the Lord Jesus Christ knows exactly what you're talking about.

But the thing is this. Jesus is looking for you to stand up for him. If he has worked in your heart, the worst thing that you can do is to try and conceal it, to try and hide it, to not let on.

Because remember that salvation, as it tells us in Romans, there are two things required. To believe within our heart, not just in our head. I mean, we have to... There's a believing in our head that's important where we, as we would say, give mental assent to all the truths that are in the Word.

[12 : 04] But we need more than that. We need this where we need to receive Jesus, where we need to accept Jesus as our Lord and our Savior. But we need also to confess him.

To believe in the heart and to confess with the mouth. Will you stand up for Christ? Or is there anybody in here tonight who is maybe, hasn't yet come to a position of knowing that Jesus has worked in their heart?

You're still outside the kingdom. But, you know, when you come to church, you're touched, you're affected. And there are many times you sit in church and maybe you go home and maybe in the quiet of your own room, you say to yourself, you know, I should become a Christian.

There may be some in here tonight and that's what you want. You want to be a Christian and yet you're scared. My friend, the Lord will do you nothing but good.

You're afraid of the unknown. You're afraid of taking that step outside. You're used to your own comfort zone. I understand it. We're used to a particular way and form of life.

[13 : 16] We don't know what's there. We're afraid to take that step. Please ask the Lord tonight. Lord, please, please come into my heart and take me.

Take me to yourself. Take me. Give me that faith that will accept, that will move on. Anyway, we find that Paul is saying to Timothy, 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 he's saying, don't be ashamed of the testimony of Christ. Be prepared to stand up for Christ. And don't be ashamed of me. Now, poor Paul, you know, when he was in prison, he tells us this, that many had turned away from him.

You are aware, it says, he says in verse 15, that all who are in Asia turned away from me. Later on, he talks about how many had forsaken him, abandoned him.

Poor apostle, in his hour of need, he felt them all, virtually all, leaving him and abandoning him. They were afraid. They were ashamed. They were ashamed of Paul.

[14 : 35] But I suppose for a lot of them, when they saw what was happening to Paul, they said, if I identify myself with Paul, the same will happen to me. It's exactly how you find the disciples with Jesus.

You know, when Jesus was taken, when he was captured in the garden, what they thought was impossible actually happened. They all forsook him and fled. Because a wee while earlier, Jesus had been telling them, you're all going to leave me.

You're all going to abandon me. And Peter, Peter was, you could almost hear the anger in Peter's voice. He resented what Jesus was saying. And he's saying, oh yeah, others might.

I won't. He said, I am ready to go to prison and I am ready to die for you. Peter meant it. But you know, when everything changed for Peter, and Peter was out of his comfort zone, and he was no longer in control, Peter, like the others, ran away.

And Peter went further than the others. He denied Jesus with oaths and with curses. So you see, we might not think that that could happen to us.

[15 : 50] But it can. And that's why Paul is here. He's urging Timothy. And he says, look, don't be ashamed of the testimony. Don't be ashamed of the people of God. If they're suffering, if they're

going through difficult times, identify yourself with them.

And don't be afraid of the suffering that is involved. None of us want suffering. And it's part of something that you want to shy away from.

You know how the Apostle Paul in Philippians, he says, that I might know him, talking about Jesus. This is his great prayer. That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection.

And you say, Amen, I want to know the power of his resurrection too, and the fellowship of his suffering. And you say, Oh, hold on. Not too sure that I want to enter into the fellowship of his suffering.

But you know, my friends, this is part of the Christian life. It is part of it. It's in a mysterious way.

[16:54] And God is using all the pain and all the suffering that we go through for our good, for our ultimate glory. God is working it.

Remember how it says, our light affliction, which is, but for a moment, what does it do? Worketh in you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

So that God is using the suffering, the pain, the affliction, the trials, the temptations, all these things are being worked. It's like a cement mixer churning everything around, but it's by grace, and it's working, working, working, and it's working towards a future weight of glory.

And in comparison to the weight of glory, the afflictions are light. You may be saying, oh, they're not light in my experience.

And right now, they aren't. But in comparison to what glory will be, they are. That's how it's demonstrated.

[18:03] So we have to be ready for the suffering. And I know that some people will say, well, I could never suffer for Jesus Christ. You know, tonight, throughout this world, there are many people who are suffering in the most horrendous ways for no other reason but that they love the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are many countries where Christians have lost their rights. They've lost their right to work. They have lost their home. They've lost their family. There are many imprisoned.

And there are many who have been killed and who are under the sentence of death, just like the Apostle Paul, for no other reason than that they love the Lord Jesus Christ. And we must pray, even although we don't know these people, we hear of some of them, many of them we don't know, but let us pray for them.

The suffering. I think I've said it before, you probably know, a man way back, I can't remember his name, one in the times where Christians were being burnt at the stake for their adherence to Christ within our own land.

And this man was in prison. I can't remember his name just now. And he was a very gentle man. And he was afraid that he wouldn't have the strength to witness for Christ, that he would give in because the sentence had been passed to you was to be burnt at the stake.

[19:33] And there was a wee candle in his cell. And one night he tried by putting his finger into the flame of the candle, could he bear it? And he couldn't.

And he said, I have to be burnt at the stake and I can't even bear keeping my finger on the flame of the candle for a second. And he was saying to the Lord, Lord, I am so going to let you down.

I will be completely unable to bear what is set before me. And yet the remarkable thing is that when the time came, he withstood the flame and bore wonderful testimony to the Lord.

You see, God gives us special grace in the middle of the suffering. That's why he couldn't bear the flame because he wasn't going through the fire at that particular time.

But when the time came, the promise was there. When you go through the fire, the Lord has promised to be there with him. And he was. So sometimes we look ahead and we say, oh, I can't bear it.

[20:37] This will be too much for me. I won't be able to. But when the time comes, the Lord will give the grace. And then we find Timothy then again saying, but I am not ashamed in verse 12, for I know whom I have believed.

He knew. And I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. Now, people look at this in two ways.

What has been entrusted to me? At one level, I would say the context, and as it follows on, if we read further on, it says here in verse 14, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

And so on. And we can look at this in two ways. At one level, the gospel of Jesus Christ was entrusted to Paul.

He was given this. And so were the early apostles. They were given, they were entrusted with this message to go out and declare without fear and without favor and to bring the great news of Jesus Christ to people.

[21 : 47] And so the apostle was so aware that this is something that had been entrusted to him. But I also look at it another way, and I think we can very legitimately look at it another way because it tells us in the margin or down, another way of looking at it is, or what I have entrusted to him.

So that we can see it both ways, what has been entrusted to him and looking at it, what he has entrusted to the Lord. And when we look at it that way, we can look at it, yes, with regard to the proclamation and the preaching of the gospel, but we can also see it personally in the transaction that took place where Paul's soul was given to Jesus Christ.

Because, you know, that's what happens when a person is converted. You and I haven't the power to keep our soul out of hell. You and I do not have the power to take our soul to heaven.

You and I do not have the power to keep our soul one step of the way from it being devoured from every enemy. Only the Lord can do that. And when the Lord saves a soul, that's what he does.

He keeps on saving it. He saves it once and for all, but there's a continued work involved. The saving is what we would term justified, where we are pronounced right, righteous, where we are declared free from condemnation in his sight.

[23 : 22] It's a legal term. But then there is this ongoing saving. And that's what the Lord is doing every single day.

Every day we're being kept. Beautiful word, kept. We're kept by the power of God unto salvation.

That's what we're told in 1 Peter. And that word kept is we're guarded.

It's like the Lord has put a guard around your soul. Your body may be hurt and hammered and eventually destroyed, but your soul will be kept. And of course, your body will be one day reunited with your soul.

And so the apostle is aware that his soul is safe. And may you be encouraged tonight to know if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, your soul is safe.

There are enemies around you and about you and Satan would love to get you right now and tear you limb from limb and drag you to hell, but he can't. He cannot touch you, cannot break you, cannot take your soul because you're in the hand, that mighty hand of the Lord.

[24 : 36] And the apostle knew that. And he knew that this Jesus, because that's what he says, I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard.

I am convinced of it because Paul knew him. Now, I quite believe that Paul in prison would experience Satan's temptations because Paul, remember, knew all about satanic temptation. Writing in Corinthians, that's exactly what he said because he says, lest Satan should get an advantage over us for we are not ignorant of his devices.

We're not ignorant of his ways. You know, some people think that gospel workers or ministers or elders or deacons or missionaries that they don't know anything about temptation.

They don't know anything about Satan's activity. It's a very reverse. Nobody knows more of it. Jesus was bombarded throughout his life all the time, bombarded day and night by Satan.

[25 : 52] And Paul, the great apostle, is saying, we're not ignorant of his ways of his devices. And I'm sure that Satan would have been whispering to Paul in prison. Paul, what's going to happen to the gospel work?

What's going to happen to the church in Ephesus and in Corinth and in Colossae? What's going to happen in Philippi? Paul, the executioner's acts, is awaiting you.

When you die, the work will die. But Paul knew it wouldn't. Because if we look at this as Paul is entrusting the gospel work, the gospel work that had been entrusted to him, he was entrusting to the Lord.

And Paul knew the gospel wouldn't die with him. And it won't die with any man. Because it's God's word and it's God's work. We must always remember that.

God will see to it. And he will bring his word to prosper where he will and when he will. What we are to go to the Lord and say as Christians is, Lord, use me where I am for your glory's sake.

[27 : 00] So I'm sure Satan was whispering to Paul in prison. And he'd be saying to Paul, as we were saying at the beginning, is this the reward you get?

Is this what you get for following the Lord? He's forgotten all about you. I would, I'm almost positive that Satan would have been whispering these words to Paul.

the Lord's forgotten you. Paul, that's why you're here. And you know, to a certain extent, this might almost be a reaction. Although Paul, as we know, has been led by the Holy Spirit to write in this way, this could even be a reaction where Paul is meeting the temptation of Satan and saying, I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able.

I know whom I have believed. The more you know someone, remember that we all know the story of the wee boy who was stuck on the rocks.

Remember, he was over collecting the eggs, seagull's eggs, and he was stuck on the cliff ledge. And the people from the village came and they lowered a rope to him to try and get him back up.

[28 : 22] And he wouldn't take that rope until he knew that his father was on the other end of it. Because he knew that his father loved him. He knew that his father would not let that rope go.

And so he wouldn't take it until they had brought his father to the top of the cliff. And that, in a sense, is how it is for the Christian.

We know Jesus. And the more we know of him, the more we will trust him. You see, Paul had been taken to the third heaven. Paul knew Jesus in a way and at a level that few ever have.

And so he says, I know, I trust my all to him. And so the Lord is the one who is going to guard his soul.

What about you tonight? Have you come to trust this Jesus? Or are you still coming into church and going out the same way as you have done for years?

[29 : 30] You know, it's a solemn thing to come in and to go out week in, week out, and change. Don't get me wrong. I thank the Lord you're here. Continue, keep coming.

time. But you know, there's something you've got to say to yourself, why is it still the same? Because it's not time that you faced up to where you are.

You know, the time is passing. Because Paul, and with this we conclude, Paul is saying he is able to guard until that day. What day is that?

Well, we all know there's a day coming. There are various days spoken about in the Bible. There is the day when the Lord's return will come. There is the day of judgment.

There is a time, there are various times. There's a time where the Lord, we know there's going to be new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. What is ahead is so wonderful.

[30 : 30] But we're told it is appointed unto all men once to die and after death the judgment. And I think Paul is looking ahead. to that great day when the books will be opened and where all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

You'll be there, I'll be there. As sure as we're here tonight we will be there. And the Bible tells us we have to give an account of all that we have done in the body whether good or bad.

And that is a frightening prospect. But the Bible also shows us that there is only one way that we can be delivered on that day.

And that is by having an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous one. And if Jesus is ours, he stands up for us. He is both judge and advocate.

It's his judgment seat. And he with unerring accuracy sifts through our life. But if he sees us clothed in his righteousness, then you know what it says?

[31 : 36] We will be openly acknowledged and acquitted. In other words, before all the audience there will be this declaration.

This he, she is mine, loves me, has served me. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord. What a wonderful moment that's going to be.

But you know, if we don't know Jesus, if we've pushed Jesus away, if we've ignored Jesus, rejected Jesus, at the end of the day the Lord is going to say, well, what you did on earth will continue here now.

Because I'm going to give you what you wanted, what you chose. You chose not to have me. Well, that choice now is eternal.

You know, some people think that somehow you can continue to reject Jesus and yet it'll be all right at the end. It cannot. If you reject him now, he will give you that choice.

[32 : 40] Choose you this day whom you will serve. Seek the Lord so that, as Paul says, you have Jesus, you have him now, you have him for all time, you have him for death, and you have him for eternity.

And on that great day, you will be taken to be with him forever. Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our God, we pray that we may be challenged and touched by this great gospel.

Lord, may we not walk away from it, but may we realize this is the most important thing for our life. To have Christ is everything. To be without Christ is the most awful place to be.

Impress upon our souls, Lord, the need for having Jesus. May we see the urgency of this great gospel. Press it into our heart, into our thinking, because it's so easy to become complacent under the word.

Bless us then, we pray, and do us good. Spread the mantle of your love over us, we ask, and take away from us our sin. In Jesus' name, Amen.