

The Gospel to be Unashamed of. 2 Timothy 2:8-13

What keeps you in the game?

It is always interesting listening to sportsmen and women when they retire – as I was listening to Shaun Burgoyne and Alistair Clarkson on Thursday night

Both have had long and distinguished careers in a demanding profession – and both talked of having a rest

But you think of the effort involved to perform at that level – 17 years coaching Hawthorn for Clarkson and 407 games for Burgoyne, and you Wonder - What kept them in the game for so long?

It may be a mixture of things – adulation of the crowds, the elation of success, the security of the money

But often sports people will talk of passion

Of taking a break to recover their passion

OR stopping because they realised they had lost their passion

At the highest level, and fundamentally, what keeps people going week after week, with the bruises and the discipline, the ups and downs – is the love of the game itself

What will keep Timothy going in the gospel preaching and passing on game?

What will keep Timothy persevering with the task entrusted to him, the task of holding fast to the model of Paul's teaching and guarding the good gospel deposit, passing on the gospel faithfully

2 Timothy 1: ¹³ Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Because, let's face it, while like Paul we may use sporting or athletic analogies the call to gospel ministry is a call to something that is tougher and longer than a sportsman's career, even if it runs as long as Shane Burgoyne's

As we heard in vv. 1-7 this is a call to suffering, life long suffering

2 Timothy 2: ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. ⁵ Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops.

The Suffering

Of the single minded soldier who wants to please the Lord who has enlisted him in His service

of the disciplined and dedicated athlete

of the hard working farmer

What will keep Timothy going in this ministry year after year?

What will keep you sharing the gospel, using your time to teach it to others, year after year

As believers our gifts and circumstances are different from Timothy's

Even though some of us may be called to a life of gospel preaching and teaching – that is what we're praying

But every believer shares in the command our Lord gave [Matt. 28:18-20] to make disciples, the command given to the disciples to be passed on to all who through their ministry become disciples

What will keep you at it, unashamed, calling people to follow Jesus, teaching them to do all that Jesus has commanded, sharing with them the message that brings life and immortality.

Paul has himself persevered in this task to the end, he has run the race, fought the fight.

And Paul knows that what will sustain Timothy, what will sustain anyone, sustain us in giving ourselves to the work of the gospel – to making it known faithfully

Is the gospel itself.

It is love of the gospel itself, conviction of its truth, that will keep us in the game, keep us unashamed to share the gospel with all

And so, having called Timothy to suffer for the gospel he now turns to this gospel in vv. 8-13 to encourage Timothy and all of us to persevere in making the gospel known

The gospel

Here he will tell us the gospel's content, power and promise

And if we know the truth for ourselves of what he says – then through times of weakness, times when we seem to be just limping along in our Christian walk, times of frustration, times of hardship, as well as times of blessing, we won't give up

We will persevere unashamed, thankfully and confidently, in making the gospel known

The gospel

Content [Romans 1:3-4]

2 Timothy 2:⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel,

Remember Jesus Christ

It is actually continuous – keep on remembering, continually remember, Jesus Christ

This is not the school re-union remembering

You know those conversation – Whatever happened to Bill?

Bill?

Yes, the bloke who glued your desk shut

Oh Bill, now I remember

Not that kind of remembering

This is identity shaping and present motivating remembering – like Anzac remembering

But doing it every day

This is keep at the front of your mind always, never forgetting for a moment, remembering

Remember continuously Jesus Christ

You might think it is strange to call a Christian to do that – we have Jesus in our name

But the reality is we are good at forgetting

Good at becoming pre-occupied with the affairs of our business, or the concerns of our families, we can be overwhelmed with events, with joys and sorrows

Our Lord knew this

He gave us the Lord's Supper so that we would remember Him

Doing what Paul says, remembering Christ continuously, always being conscious of the Lord Jesus

Is the key not just to ministry but the Christian life

To knowing who we are, where we have come from, where we are heading, how we should live each day as believers

We are so frail and remembering Jesus so important that it is good to consciously build

Ways of remembering Jesus in your daily life, to get good habits of remembering

Ask yourself

What holds before me the truth of the gospel, of who Jesus is

In my day – is it something as simple as saying grace, or the discipline of daily prayer and bible reading

In my week – meeting with others in growth group and church, even if on line

In my year – do I celebrate the saving events remembered in our calendar – Christmas, Easter, Pentecost

Does my life show that I am determined to remember Jesus Christ?

Now Paul here highlights two elements of the gospel message that will be particularly helpful for Timothy to remember – and for us, because they are so exciting

Remember Jesus Christ, Risen from the dead

Christians can get used to that phrase

But no one else has done that

Walk around a big cemetery, and then multiply those graves across the world, through history

See the millions and millions who once lived like you

And now lie there, rotting, in their graves or tombs

And then if you can bear it think of the sundering of love, of the tears that have flown

Death takes us all, it is the veil that covers all nations [Isaiah 25:6-8]

And then say – Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead

In our Lord there is a power of life that death cannot touch, death can't hold him in the grave

Think of that power, that life welling up, irrepressible, for ever

Think the Jesus we remember lives – lives to hear us

Not dead and distant, but living and near to help us, to help all who call on Him

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead

Descended from David

You might think this is just a throwback to Paul's Jewish past or a nod to any Jewish readers

But it was important to Paul

He included it in the summary of the gospel with which he introduces his letter to the Romans [Romans 1:3-4]

Romans 1:³ concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh ⁴ and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.

And it should be important to us

Because it tells us why Jesus' resurrection matters

Jesus' resurrection wasn't just some kind of random, isolated event, just good for Jesus

When Paul says the gospel proclaims Jesus as descended from David it is saying that Jesus is the one in whom the plan and promise of God revealed over centuries

the plan and promise of God to bring His people to live securely with Him, in His presence forever, is fulfilled.

The promises to Abraham [Gen. 12:1-3]

The promises to Israel in the Old Covenant

Are focused by the prophets in the promise of God to David that one of His descendants will rule on David's throne forever [2 Samuel 7:11-18, 25-28; cf. Is. 55:3]

Heard that promise in Psalm 2 when God says to David's descendant

Psalm 2: ⁷ I will declare the LORD's decree.

*He said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.*

*⁸ Ask of me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance
and the ends of the earth your possession.*

You could hear it in Isaiah

*Isaiah 9: ⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

And in Isaiah it is enriched further by being joined with the prophecies of the servant of the Lord, of whom the Lord says

*Isaiah 49: ⁶ he says:
"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

We hear that promise and the expectation it created in the words of Zechariah at the beginning of Luke's gospel, where he rejoices that in the birth of his son John that time of fulfillment has started, and God has

*Luke 1:⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us;*

These promises about the forever reign of David's descendant involve all nations, all the world

All creation as they look to the establishment of the new heaven and earth

When you are remembering *Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel,*

2 Timothy 2:⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel,

You are remembering that the Lord Jesus is the living, saving King, with all authority and authority over all

The King who exercises the judgment of God – who can forgive or condemn

The King with the power of life, new life, life that death cannot destroy

Who can welcome his people into the New heaven and earth forever or shut its doors to us,

The one in whom God's plans for all creation and all time are realized.

And where do we learn this about Jesus?

Where do we meet this risen, reigning Jesus?

This Jesus who can open up the new heaven and earth to us

Remember Jesus - 'According to my gospel'

We learn the truth about Jesus in Paul's gospel

It is not Paul's because he has made it up

It is Paul's because it has been entrusted to him

The Lord made him 'a herald, an apostle, and teacher' [1:11]

Because the Lord wants His gospel known, known to the world, known to those dying without hope of life

This is the content of the gospel being entrusted now to Timothy

The gospel we are to be unashamed of

And it is so good!

Here is news that the Lord Jesus who was humble and meek, who welcomed children, who turned away no one in need, who made the lame walk and the blind see, who preached good news to the poor

Is the ruler of God's kingdom

Not the violent and greedy, not the proud and selfish – they don't get the last word.

Jesus does

So good because here is a promise of life from the one who has conquered death, who can make that promise with certainty

So good because it is true

The gospel is news, a declaration of what God has done in history

Jesus risen from the dead is not an idea or philosophy. It is the report of a witnessed event. Those who knew him, those who saw him die, testifying that they had seen, spoken with touched and eaten with Jesus alive from the dead.

He had convinced them by His presence that having died and been buried He was now alive.

If you have questions about that, get in touch

Or learn about Jesus' resurrection as part of His bigger story, the gospel story by participating in Christianity Explored with Chris.

Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, is great good news

It is a gospel is worth suffering for,

and Paul who calls us to remember is as he writes enduring suffering for this gospel

Power

⁹ *for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound.*

¹⁰ *This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

Paul with a line brings us face to face with his circumstances

Bound. He may very well be chained, manacled as well as being imprisoned – he has certainly lost his freedom

HE has no power at all –

we have felt for ourselves in a small way the powerlessness of not being able to make plans, go where we want when we want, talk to who we want when we want

It is so much Worse for Paul. Unable to do anything of his own free will, powerless

And he has lost his reputation

The only other place the word translated criminal is used is in Luke's gospel to describe those crucified with Jesus, violent lawless men

Paul is reckoned a serious criminal, a threat to the state

Paul is marginalised, slandered, powerless, suffering – not someone who is going to impress as the ambassador for a great king

Paul is not surprised by his circumstance, he doesn't see it as a contradiction to the truth of the gospel – that's not the issue

Jesus himself had warned that His messengers would face trial and imprisonment, hostility and suffering [Matthew 10, 24; John 15] and what is happening to Paul confirms the truth of what Jesus said

But you might think his situation would damage the reputation of the gospel, be an impediment to others believing it, an obstacle to the spread of the gospel, to people taking his message seriously – a King with all authority whose servants are beaten up and imprisoned!

And Paul could think, with this kind of association with shame and humiliation, this kind of press, this level of hostility – why bother. Surely it could never succeed and so I may as well give up.

Not Paul. He might be bound *But the word of God is not bound.*

The word of God. That is what the gospel is, not a word of man, but the word of the living God.

1 Thess, 2: ¹³ This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the word of God, which also works effectively in you who believe.

Colossians 1: ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

But what does he mean when He says the word of God is not bound, and why is this a reason to keep on enduring

Paul is not talking here about the fact that even if he is in prison other people will preach the gospel

That is true [Phil. 1:12-14] but not the point here

Here he is speaking of the power of the gospel itself

He is contrasting the gospel with himself and his circumstances

He is bound – weak, his situation unattractive, unpersuasive in his chains

But his powerlessness, his weakness, does not make the gospel powerless or unattractive

The gospel does not take its power or its effectiveness from its messengers

It is the other way round

It is the word of the living God, the God whose word brought all things into being, the word of the God who has promised that His word will

*Isaiah 55:*¹⁰ *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

You could as much make the living God weak and powerless as make His word powerless

It continues powerful in Paul’s weakness, and that is why Paul,

Perseveres with preaching the gospel even in weakness and hardship, even as he suffers in chains

¹⁰ *This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

Because the gospel is the powerful word of God Paul keeps on faithful to his commission whatever his circumstances, even preaching at his trial

*2 Timothy 4:*¹⁷ *But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.*

Paul knows the gospel entrusted to him is the means God will use to save His people, His elect.

Paul knows God has His people, not just amongst the Jews but also amongst the nations [Romans 9, those elected, chosen by God’s grace, for salvation

*Romans 9:*²³ *in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?*

And he knows God brings them to salvation through the preaching of the gospel. A belief in God’s electing grace is not the enemy of evangelism

It is the motive for persevering evangelism, for continuing to speak the gospel even when it is unpopular and opposed.

Whatever the circumstance, because this is the means God uses to save His people, that gospel preaching will be fruitful.

It is by the gospel word, and only by the gospel word, that God's people will be saved.

Faith, writes Paul in Romans 10, comes through hearing, and so the word must be made known

Romans 10: ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? ¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

It is in this way Jesus will call his other sheep, by His word.

John 10: ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Whatever our circumstance – whether we are enjoying health or sickness, success or failure in the world's eyes, honour or dishonour – because the Word of God is not bound we can make the gospel known with confidence it will achieve its purpose

And we should make it known. It is love to make it known for it brings those who believe it to obtain the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory.

'with eternal glory'

That phrase is a reminder again of how great and good is the salvation the gospel brings,

Of how the preacher of the gospel in his poverty brings us to immeasurable wealth

We don't think much about eternal glory

But the New Testament speaks often of the glory that will be believers

Romans 5: ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 4: ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

The glory that was lost through sin, the glory of being able to live in the presence of God, to know Him, to see His face

Beyond our imagination as it is – will be ours

Believers will share in the resurrection life of our Lord Jesus, glorious, eternal life in bodies fitted for the new heaven and earth

Philippians 3:²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

1 Corinthians 15:⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.

This salvation in Christ the gospel brings is glorious

And Paul assures us this gospel does not become powerless in our powerlessness

It doesn't become marginal when we are marginalised

It doesn't depend on our success for its success

It will do its work in our weakness, irrelevancy, in our dismissal from consideration of the powerful

For it is the word of God

And the salvation it brings is good, so good

That is why it is worth us enduring all things to make it known

And to further encourage perseverance in being unashamed of the gospel Paul brings home the goodness of the gospel by reminding Timothy of what the gospel promises in a pithy summary

Promise

¹¹ *This saying is trustworthy:*

*For if we died with him,
we will also live with him;*

¹² *if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he will also deny us;*

¹³ *if we are faithless, he remains faithful,
for he cannot deny himself.*

*For if we died with him,
we will also live with him;*

If we died with Him. Paul is recalling the beginning of the Christian life, when we first believe the gospel, a beginning baptism is a picture of.

Speaking of that beginning Paul says in Romans 6

*Romans 6:*³ *Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*⁴ *Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life.*⁵ *For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection.*⁸ *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him,*

To become a believer is to die with Christ to the old way of life, to die to the power and rule of sin in our lives.

And the gospel that calls us to that death of repentance, the death of saying no to ourselves and yes to Jesus as our boss, our Lord, promises life.

Life in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, life free from the power of sin now so that we can walk in newness of life,

Life that will continue to share the resurrection life with Christ

The gospel promises life to all who repent and believe

And the gospel promises to those who persevere a share in Christ's reign

¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him;

*Matthew 10:*²² *You will be hated by everyone because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

[Matt. 10:22, 24:13, Rev. 1:9, 13:10, 14:12]

*Revelation 3:*²¹ *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

This is the promise Jesus made to His follows. Those who endure to the end will be saved – it is certain.

And that salvation is pictured as sharing in Jesus' reign.

The humiliation and shame Paul endured will be exchanged for glory

The persecution believers endure at the hands of human judges will be exchanged for sitting on thrones of judgment

The gospel promises this glory for all who endure, faithful to Christ, faithful to the task He has given us of making disciples

And the gospel also reminds us, warns us, that this life and glory is found only in Christ, and to abandon Christ is to be denied by Christ.

It is a reminder that what is at stake in enduring faithfully is not just the salvation of others, but our own

if we deny him, he will also deny us;

Matthew 10:³² "Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven.

And these promises are certain, because they are the promises of the faithful God

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

Here is encouragement in our weakness and when we are dealing with the weak.

To be faithless is contrasted with the faithfulness of God.

So it is not apostasy. Faithless is to fail in faithfulness.

It is to be like Peter at the crucifixion, boasting of his faithfulness to Jesus and then running away, failing in your commitment to Him, a commitment you know He deserves.

You might have your own examples of being faithless

Where that faithlessness is not just prompted by fear of violence

But fear of being different - When you were drawn in by friends to doing things which Jesus forbids – like getting drunk, or – whatever

Or fear of loss, when, for the sake of personal ambition, for advancement at work, you compromise ethically

Or fear of loneliness, when for sexual satisfaction moving in with your girlfriend or boyfriend

And then, by God's grace, like Peter you feel the grief of that, a coldness, distance in your relation with the Lord, you know you have betrayed your Lord

Here we learn that because God is who He is that failure need not be final

He will be faithful to Himself

He will be the God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, who forgives, as He forgave an adulterous David [Exodus 34:5-7]

And Jesus will be the Saviour He has said He came to be – the Saviour of sinners

1 Timothy 1:¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1 John 1:⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God in His faithfulness makes a promise to those who believe in the Lord Jesus that He will forgive sin, just as He promises in 1 Corinthians 10 to provide a way of escape so that we need not sin.

1 Corinthians 10: ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Believing the gospel brings us to put our hope, not in ourselves, but in God Himself

The God who will always be whom He has declared Himself to be. He will never deny Himself.

And that is a great encouragement

Encouragement to persevere when we know our own weakness and frailty. He remains faithful. Our failure need not be final

The failure you may be conscious of now need not be final

You can turn back for mercy and restoration

Encouragement when ministering to others in their failure.

That, as we will see next week, is part of the ministry Timothy is called to,

Timothy is to seek the repentance even of those who oppose him, who have believed lies.

2 Timothy 2: ²⁴ The Lord's servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, ²⁵ instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. ²⁶ Then they may come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Here is the encouragement that those he gently persuades and teaches can find their way back, can repent of their error and find forgiveness and restoration.

He needs that to persevere

And part of the ministry we all have to each other is to gently teach each other the truth, to call each other back from faithlessness – and here is the encouragement that it is worth it, worth the difficult conversation

For God will be true to Himself and forgive the repentant.

Why persevere unashamed of the gospel, even when, as Paul tells us it will – that perseverance will bring suffering, bring the hardship the good soldier, the dedicated athlete, the hardworking farmer, endures.

Because of the gospel itself -

its content – the Lord Jesus, risen and reigning, the hope of the ages,

its power – the unbound Word of God,

and its promise – life, glory and mercy.

There is no better word to believe

No better word to share

Do you know its goodness and power for yourself?

Do you rejoice to remember that the Lord Jesus is risen from the dead

Have you heard Him calling you to Himself through it

Dying to yourself, do you live with Him now, and look forward to living with Him forever

When you have failed, do you know His faithfulness, the glory of His never denying Himself – and found that He alone is your hope.

Do you keep its goodness and power always before you?

Are you determined to deliberately structure your life to every day remember Jesus

For that is your life and endurance

Will you, because you know it to be the word of God, be Confident, whatever your circumstances, to share it