

The Reminder we all need. 2 Timothy 1:1-7

Reminders are useful

As I get older I find I appreciate more and more helpful reminders – whether it is to put the garbage out, or about significant dates that are coming up like birthdays, or that I must never wear yellow

But it is not just reminders about day to day things that are helpful.

Going through life, getting sick, getting old, getting busy, it is helpful to be reminded from time to time of bigger things - that God is in control, and that He loves His people and is working all things for our good, that He always acts with justice and mercy

And the most helpful, the most timely, reminders I have found come from people who know me, who know what I am concerned about and how it is affecting me.

Today, as you have gathered from the reading, we are starting a series on 2 Timothy and in verses 1-7, the introduction to the letter, we meet its author Paul and its recipient Timothy and learn a little about them and their circumstances

And we are given three reminders we all need if we are going to be faithful to the gospel, the good news that Jesus has died for our sins, has been raised from the dead and reigns as Lord, the gospel every Christian believes and every believer is entrusted with.

Three Reminders: The Gospel is about the life we all need

The Gospel call comes from love

What God calls us to He equips us for.

Paul and his circumstances 1:1, 1:17, 4:6-8, 16-18, 9, 21

2 Timothy 1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, for the sake of the promise of life in Christ Jesus:

Most of you are probably a little familiar with Paul but as Paul's circumstances and the task entrusted to him play a big role in the what and the why of Paul's writing to Timothy, let's refresh what we know of him.

He introduces himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus

An apostle is a messenger.

In the New Testament there is a unique qualification for being Christ's apostle – it is to have seen the risen Jesus, to be a witness to His resurrection [Acts 1:21-22].

[And the risen Jesus has appeared to Paul – “Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me” he wrote in 1 Cor. 15]

Paul starts by saying he is Christ's apostle, that is Christ's messenger, bringing Christ's message with Christ's authority.

And he insists that this is not something he has just taken upon himself, appointed himself to.

It is by the will of God

This is so important that how it happened is told three times in Acts [Acts 9, 22, 26; cf. Galatians 1] as well as in Paul's letters

For example in Acts 26 Paul recounts how the risen Jesus, having appeared to him and knocked him off his donkey as he was travelling to Damascus, said

Acts 26: 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. ¹⁷ I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Paul writes as Christ's apostle, someone entrusted with Christ's gospel for the nations, the gospel he will be encouraging Timothy in this letter to persevere in preaching and teaching

And in this introduction he highlights one aspect of this gospel

He has been appointed an apostle *for the sake of the promise of life in Christ Jesus:*

The intended goal of Paul's gospel ministry is to make known to all the promise of life in Christ Jesus, life through faith in Jesus [2:10, 4:17]

And the life Jesus promises to those who trust Him is eternal life, a new life that starts now and will continue in resurrection life. [1:10]

The gospel, says Paul in v. 10, brings to light, makes visible to all, that Christ has abolished death and brings life and immortality to those who believe

2 Tim. 1:⁹ He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. ¹⁰ This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Christians talk a lot about this, so often that we can lose sight of the wonder of that message

In a world of death – and haven't we been reminded of that by this Pandemic

In a world where each one of us will die,

Where death is the background against which each of us lives out our short lives

Paul has been appointed to bring from Jesus a promise of life

And Paul has skin in the game

He is very conscious of his own coming death as he writes

As we hear in the letter Paul is a prisoner in chains in Rome [1:17]. This is not the imprisonment at the end of Acts 28, but a later one, his final imprisonment.

He has already made one appearance before the court, had his preliminary hearing. [4:16]

But even though he has passed that hurdle he knows how it will end, he knows he is facing death

4:⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

It matters to Paul, just as it matters to Timothy who is being urged to visit his mentor and friend as quickly as possible, that the gospel for which he is imprisoned, the gospel he believes and for which he will soon be put to death, is the gospel that promises life, eternal life

[The Gospel is about the life we all need]

And that is the first thing we are reminded of here.

The gospel entrusted to us as we believe the apostles, the gospel that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day

The gospel that is unfashionable with its talk of sin and judgment, its call for repentance

The gospel which might set you apart from your peers and colleagues and expose you to mocking and criticism for believing it

Has always been about life

Life in relationship with God that starts now, and continues for ever in resurrection life, deathless life.

That is what we believed in Jesus for, from the very beginning

As Paul said to those who spiritualised away our resurrection

1 Cor. 15: ¹⁹ If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.

If being a Christian is just for this life, then we have wasted our lives.

But Christ through His gospel does give us what no one else can give with confidence, for the Lord Jesus has died and has risen. He has beaten death

And our world needs life

We all die, and all of life is marked by the corruption of sin

Our bodies, and the bodies of those we love, betray us with sickness and decay

We live in a world of death

And a world where the fear of death dogs our consciousness

We saw that in Covid

We will do almost anything to keep ourselves safe from death

Shut out the world, shut down the economy

Some will live in virtual isolation for months on end

Covid was very confronting because up till now many of us have been lulled into a kind of false sense of security about death

Keep death at a distance

Many of us, if we have known people who have died, have only known old people who have died

And we let them die at the periphery of our lives – not in our homes, but in hospitals or nursing homes

And we live in a society that has kept itself from grappling with the mystery of death, from the unthinkable separation of our souls from our bodies, our life from the life around us, by telling itself comforting stories

Life just ends and then you rot, as if you were just your body

Or people will go and be with the angels, or become another star shining down on us

Or that somehow our lives will be recycled

Empty stories

But as believers in our society, like our society

We tend not to think of death, just focus on this life, the present

And so often we focus on other aspects of the gospel – on forgiveness, or on the community it creates, or a sense of peace

We treat the promise of eternal life like a serves of chips on the side of the gospel meal

Good to have there, but not the main meal

But the promise of life is what the gospel is about

And there will come a time when it will really matter to you and I, just like it matters to Paul

When you are contemplating your end and recognise at the funeral of your friend you don't know when it will be, but it is certain

When You feel your age – like me, reckon it is more than two thirds over, that the day of death is closer than the day of birth

When You receive the diagnosis – of covid or cancer.

Isn't it good that the gospel brings the promise of life, eternal life

A sure promise for Jesus is risen

Good for you to know, to be sure of

So that like Paul, you can face your end with constancy and hope

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race”

Good to share

Brothers and sisters, We have been made to think that talking about Jesus is somehow rude, an imposition on others, we should be ashamed of even wanting to do

But Christians with this gospel are rich people living in a desperately poor world

A world where People are helpless

Facing a certain death with uncertainty, fear,

Fear of the unknown, fear of the horror of separation, fear of judgment

The gospel that promises life through repentance and faith in Jesus – is great good news, unparalleled good news

Do you know the goodness of that news for yourself?

Know where you will be when you die? Have good grounds for believing what you believe – like someone rising from the dead to tell you about life after death?

And if you are a believer

Do you let yourself feel the goodness of a gospel that promises life?

Does it make you thankful and joyous? Every day?

Or are you too immersed in your present, passing concerns

Do you let it give you courage and compassion?

Paul writes to Timothy as one appointed by God to bring the gospel of Jesus, to bring the promise of life in Christ Jesus, to all the nations

And he writes to Timothy, his dearly loved child or son

Timothy and his relationship with Paul 1:2-6

2 Timothy 1:2 To Timothy, my dearly loved son.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now if you have been hanging around church for a while will have probably heard of Timothy as well.

He has been working alongside Paul since Paul picked him to work with him in Acts 16:1-3 – which was nearly 15 years ago

He is a tried and tested gospel worker - teaching and preaching, accompanying Paul on his second and third missionary journeys, with him in his first imprisonment, sent by Paul as his delegate to some difficult situations in Thessalonica [1 Thess. 3:1-3], Corinth [1 Cor. 16:10-11], Philippi [Phil. 2:19-24], and most recently to Ephesus [1 Tim. 1:3].

But what I want you to notice is the affection with which Paul writes

Timothy, as you heard is 'dearly loved'

Someone for whom Paul feels a longstanding, enduring, affection

Who has, like our children, a permanent place in his heart

³ I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. ⁴ Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also.

Timothy is someone, v. 3, Paul is grateful to God for knowing, and for whom he prays constantly

Timothy's tears at his departure are etched into his memory

And he longs to see him – and that is a longing he is acting upon, writing to urge Timothy to come to him in Rome.

2 Timothy 4:9 Make every effort to come to me soon,

²¹ Make every effort to come before winter.

And he knows their reunion, even in the shadow of his certain death, will be joyful

And Timothy is someone whose faith Paul respects – he is convinced that like his mother and grandmother Timothy's faith is sincere, genuine.

In fact Paul wrote of Timothy to the Philippians

Philippians 2:20 For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; ²¹ all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know his proven character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father.

I want you to note the genuine love and respect Paul has for Timothy, to feel it coming through the words on the page as Timothy must have, because of what Paul says next to Timothy, and what it will mean for him

2 Timothy 1:6 Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Rekindle is probably not the best translation. Something more like 'Keep fanning into flame' or keep your gift continually burning

Paul is not calling Timothy to restart something he has stopped, but to keep going with renewed zeal something he is already doing

What he is to keep doing is exercising the gift God has given him.

Here, in this personal letter, Paul associates it with the laying on of his hands. In 1 Timothy, a public letter, he associates it with the laying on of hands of the elders and a prophecy pointing to Timothy as the person to join Paul in his mission. Just as Paul and Barnabas were designated for their work by the Spirit and sent out with prayer and the laying on of hands in Acts 13:1-3, so Timothy had been.

And in that commissioning there was equipping for the work by the gift of God's grace, what John Stott calls 'the authority and power to be a minister of Christ' – authority and power to exercise the gift of evangelism, and to be a pastor, preacher and teacher [1 Timothy 4:13-16, 2 Tim. 4:1-5].

Reminding Timothy that he was gifted was in itself an encouragement,

And he Needed the encouragement to keep going, to keep applying himself, because it was tough

You can get a sense of this from the letter

Firstly his father in the faith is imprisoned and facing death. Think of the grief of that.

But as we read on we hear of

People in Asia, where Timothy is, deserting Paul 1:15

Of False teachers who will oppose and confuse his teaching 2:17

Of the open hostility of Alexander 4:14-15

We read of hard times [3:1] in a society who were lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God 3:4

And congregations that would not want to listen to sound teaching but turn aside to myths 4:3-4

That is a tough context to minister in, and to keep on ministering in without being worn down and discouraged, wondering if it is worth keeping going.

And Paul is quite explicit that faithful ministry he is urging on Timothy will mean suffering

*1:8 So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. **Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.***

*2:3 **Share in suffering** as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

*4:5 But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, **endure hardship**, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

Paul's call to fan into flame his gift, to keep on keeping on with exercising his gift as an evangelist, pastor and teacher is a call to suffering

A call that comes from genuine and great love.

Think about that

Paul calls Timothy his beloved child

But as he faces his death he doesn't say

'I've had it tough, but I hope you have a good life

You stay out of trouble, settle down somewhere with a good wife in a quiet place

And he doesn't say – 'I've stuck at it and look where its got me. You fulfill your dreams'

He says – fan into flame your gift – you keep at the work of preaching the gospel

And be willing to suffer

And he says it because he genuinely loves and cares for Timothy

Paul thinks that preaching Jesus' gospel matters more than anything, more than Timothy's, and your and mine, trouble free life.

Why? – because it is true and brings

Life for all who believe, preacher and hearer,

Paul knows Jesus is the risen Lord and so he is convinced that nothing matters more than being faithful to the Jesus who gives life, to doing the work He calls us to with the gifts He equips us with

The Gospel call comes from love

And when you think about it, Paul's encouragement to Timothy to keep on with the work Christ has given him is not so different to Jesus' call to us, to every believer

The Christian life begins with a call to suffer from someone who knows us and loves us deeply.

Hear Jesus

Luke 9:²³ Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will save it. ²⁵ For what does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world, and yet loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and that of the Father and the holy angels.

Taking up your cross, which the condemned criminal had to do, to carry their own cross to the place of execution – was an image of horror to the first hearers

Calling you to deny yourself and take up your cross daily – is a call to endure hardship for Jesus, to endure suffering for the sake of doing what HE says, going where He directs

It is not a call to fulfill your dreams, realise your ambitions

It is a call to have no other life than the life Jesus gives you – when you lose your life for His sake

Let that sink in

Where you live, who you marry, what you do with your money, who you associate with, how you respond to insult or sexual temptation

All is to be directed by Jesus, by doing what Jesus wants, not what you want

The call to follow is a call to use what we are given to serve in love, to serve Jesus, to serve His people, to serve the world by making the gospel known

It is all encompassing, it is a giving up your life to follow

And sometimes we will feel it is hard

To give up that non Christian boyfriend or girlfriend so your loyalty is undivided

To leave that job you worked so hard to get so that you can spend more time telling others about Jesus

To abandon your self-protective control that frustrates loving others

To keep going in godliness when you are discouraged by lack of change

A call to suffering, but it is a call that comes from love, the love that wants to give you life

that love that will give His life to give you eternal life

That is right

We cannot be loved more than Jesus has loved us

Love can do no greater than give up its life to do good to the one loved, and Jesus has given up His life for us

Given up his life while we were sinners, rebels against His rule

Dying in our place to endure the judgement, the death, our sin deserves

Dying on the cross to bring us forgiveness

Paul is straight with Timothy, clear about what he expects of Timothy as a follower of Jesus entrusted with the gospel

And the Lord Jesus is straight with us

Straight with us about what it means to follow Him, to be one of His followers, because He loves us, and he wants us to live

And He knows life is found only in following Him, trusting Him and doing what He teaches.

But a call to persevere energetically in ministry in the face of opposition and discouragement, in the wearying work of correcting false teaching and seeking those who stray

The call to suffer

Can be overwhelming to think of, just as denying yourself, taking up your cross daily to follow Jesus can be overwhelming when we think of it, even when we are convinced Jesus is Lord, and Jesus loves us.

So Paul encourages Timothy by looking at what our God gives us to sustain our life and service as Jesus' followers, as those entrusted with the gospel of Jesus for the world

The encouragement Paul gives vv. 2, 6-7

That encouragement starts at verse 2,

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Grace, mercy and peace

That is what God our Father and the Lord Jesus give Timothy, and gives every believer

And here is all we need

Grace - God's free generous kindness to us in Christ. We receive this grace in Christ, and justified by faith in Christ Paul says we stand in grace [Romans 5:1-2].

If you looked at someone standing in the forest you would always see them amongst the trees. IF God looks at someone standing in grace, He always sees them in the midst of grace, His vision of them, His consideration of them, is always associated with grace

God always looks on believers in Jesus with favour – not an earned favour, but a freely bestowed favour. We can rely on His steadfast love

To stand in grace is to know the living God is for us, that He will work all things, including suffering, to fulfill His good purposes and promises for us

Mercy – God will always assist us with compassionate help. He will not be distant, hard, unapproachable.

Mercy is and will be ours, we can always, as the author of Hebrews says, approach God with confidence for 'mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.' Heb. 4:16

Timothy will never be left on his own, never without help – even as Paul's help will be lost to him

We are never without help in the difficulties we face in following Christ. We can rely on God's mercy

Peace – we have, says Paul in Romans 5, peace with God when we are justified by faith in Jesus

This is an objective peace, not a feeling.

It is saying we are no longer reckoned as God's enemies because of our sin, we are no longer pursued by His just anger

We don't need to fear approaching Him, we don't need to fear that He is punishing us, or will turn us away

At peace we are welcome to share in all his bounty, to rely on His faithfulness

This objective peace that God has given us through making His Son the atoning sacrifice for our sins will in turn bring peace to our hearts, peace even in the face of death

For at peace with God death becomes the doorway to being with Christ, forever

Grace, mercy, peace – three small words, three words that sum up the believer's relationship with God

That assure us of all the help we need, of all the comfort Christ gives, and of the certainty of the outcome of faithful following of Jesus

This was Timothy's, and this is ours

And in God's grace and mercy He has given Timothy and every believer His Spirit

⁶ Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

When Paul calls Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God, to give himself continually to the ministry God has given him

Paul turns Timothy to the work of God in him and all believers by His Spirit.

The CSB rightly has a little 's' spirit in the first half of v. 7

Paul is saying that cowardice is not the result of God's work in us

But the Spirit God gives us in the second half of the verse speaks of the work of God's Spirit in our spirits

[Like *Romans 8:15* For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!"

1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God.]

God through His Spirit gives Timothy just what he will need to fulfill his calling, and God through His Spirit will give us just what we need to follow Christ

The Spirit give Power – power in preaching and in living a godly life. It is by the Spirit that we can put to death the misdeeds of the body, *Romans 8:13-14*, put sin to death.

And it is by the Spirit that the words of the gospel, even in our own weakness [*1 Cor. 2:3-4*], are powerful to do God's work in the lives of those who hear,

It is by the Spirit that we can make the gospel clear even under trial, for as our Lord said to the disciples in *Matthew 10* when we are brought to trial it will be given us what to speak at that time, for the Spirit will be speaking in you [*Matt. 10:19-20*]

The Spirit gives Love – the first fruit of the Spirit; the love Timothy needed not to be embittered by his service, to keep on being patient and forgiving; the love we need to keep serving cheerfully and enduringly; love for the difficult, love even for our enemies

And the Spirit gives 'sound judgement' or self control. Paul uses a word associated with prudence, moderation, discretion – all the fruit of controlling yourself, not being rash, not given to excess, not overreacting

It is what we need when provoked by unfair criticism, malicious opposition.

What we need when faced with the temptations to overindulge in response to pressure or to give in to tiredness – when you just feel like watching tele for a while, and on comes the r rated SBS movie, or you want another click on that website, or spend that money to make yourself feel good; or you think you will pour yourself another glass of wine, and another

Power, love, self control

Paul assures Timothy he can give himself perseveringly to using His gifts in ministry for The Spirit will work in Timothy's spirit what he needs to persevere in the work God has given him in the face of opposition and suffering

What God calls us to He equips us for.

And we have the same Spirit, who will work in our spirits what we need to follow Christ

What God calls us to He equips us for

Equips us for with the very gifts he gives in the gospel, grace, mercy, peace

Equips us for by the Spirit He gives to all Jesus' followers

Three Reminders

Three reminders from God's word

The Gospel is about the life we all need

The Gospel call comes from love

What God calls us to He equips us for.

Some questions

Do you know the promise of life the gospel gives? Are you assured of it? Will you still be relying on it like Paul when you face your end?

Any doubt about that, any uncertainty, if you don't know where you will be when you die – come and talk – Clinton, Andy, me

Jesus came to give us life, and His followers should know that

And He will give that life to all who repent and believe, who will say Jesus is Lord, the boss – ask for His forgiveness, and to be included amongst His people

Do you know the love that calls you to give up your life to find life? Know it because you know Christ has given His life for you?

All His followers should know that love, and it is only knowing that love that will keep you going, denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following your Lord

Again, if you don't, come and talk

And, if you are a believer, are you confident that your God has given you in the gospel and His Spirit all that you need to sustain you in a life of following Him?

Are you when tested turning to Him, depending on Him – on His grace, mercy and peace.

Are you giving your spirit to the work of His Spirit in you, giving you power, love and selfcontrol?

He has given us all we need, and we can always draw near to Him for help. Are you making use of His provision?

And finally if you know the life and love the gospel brings us to know in knowing Christ, and are confident of His grace and gracious work in you

Will you stir into flame this great gift of the conviction of the truth of the gospel

The gospel of Jesus brings life to a dying world

Will you share it, make it known, and endure suffering to do so – in your family, in your workplace, wherever the Lord has placed you.

That is what God called Timothy to do through Paul's words

And it is what HE calls every believer who knows the life and love and Spirit of Christ to do.