

What's Going to Happen to the Church?

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[0 : 00] Well, for a short while this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The Lord's enabling, if we could look at 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy chapter 1. And if we just read again from the beginning. So 2 Timothy chapter 1, reading from the beginning.

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

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers. Night.

And day. And so on. What's going to happen to the church?

[1 : 10] What's going to happen to the church? That's the question that has plagued the church of Jesus Christ in every generation. What is going to happen to the church?

It's the question the disciples asked after the death of Jesus. What's going to happen to the church? It's the question the early church asked after the death of the apostles.

What's going to happen to the church? It's the question the medieval church asked as they were heckled with different heresies. What's going to happen to the church? It's the question also the Reformation church asked as they dealt with the delusion of Roman Catholicism.

What's going to happen to the church? It's the question the covenanters asked during the killing times in the 17th century. It's the question that was asked during the Enlightenment of the 18th century.

It's the question that was asked during modernism of the 19th century and post-modernism of the 20th century and now secularism in the 21st century.

[2 : 12] What's going to happen to the church? What's going to happen to the church post-COVID? And yet, you know, despite the passing of time and the pressure to compromise and persecution to concede, the promise of Jesus Christ stands firm as when it was first spoken, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

But, you know, even with that precious promise of Jesus in Matthew 18, you know, we still question, don't we? We still question what will happen to the church in 10 years, 20 years, 30 years from now. Who's going to be here? Who's going to be gathering on a Wednesday evening for our prayer meeting? Who's going to be in Barvis Free Church? Will Barvis Free Church even exist?

What's going to happen to the church? And, you know, that's what Paul's second letter to Timothy, that's what it's all about.

It's all about exhorting and encouraging and enabling Timothy to pass on the truth of the gospel to the next generation, to our children who are currently in Sunday school, to the children who are in the creche, to our children, and as the psalmist says, to our children's children.

[3 : 45] So that even as we were singing earlier in Psalm 102, that the children who are yet unborn, that they too will gather here and praise and magnify the Lord.

What's going to happen to the church? And, you know, as Paul begins his second letter to Timothy, we see him doing two things.

We see him, first of all, remembering Timothy and then reminding Timothy. So there are two headings this evening. Remembering Timothy and reminding Timothy. So first of all, remembering Timothy.

Remembering Timothy. Look at verse 1 again. Paul writes, he says, Paul, Now, as many of you know, before the summer holidays, we were studying Paul's first letter to Timothy.

And as we came to the end of 1 Timothy, I said that I wasn't sure whether we were going to carry on into 2 Timothy or do something completely different. And I was thinking and praying about it over the summer until I went to Keswick.

[5 : 19] And I went to, as I go most years, to the Keswick Convention. And this year's speaker was Alistair Begg. He's a minister in America. And he was speaking on, you've probably guessed it, 2 Timothy.

So here we are. We're going to go and study 2 Timothy. Now, 2 Timothy is not only Paul's second letter to Timothy. It's also the last letter he wrote before his execution.

But unlike many of Paul's letters, which were written to churches and congregations throughout the Roman Empire in the first century, Paul's last letter is a very personal and pastoral letter written to a personal friend and pastor called Timothy.

And, of course, this personal and pastoral letter, it's one of three personal and pastoral letters which Paul wrote. Because Paul wrote, as you know, he wrote a personal and pastoral letter to Titus.

Titus was a young minister serving the Lord in the rural charge on the Greek island of Crete. But Timothy, this Timothy, he was, as you know, a young minister pastoring a congregation in the urban seaport city of Ephesus.

[6 : 33] And yet, regardless of their location, both pastors, both these pastors, Timothy and Titus, they needed that personal and pastoral support from the apostle Paul.

Paul was, in many ways, their tradesman. They were his apprentices. They had been taught the trade of ministry from the great apostle Paul. And both these pastors, they needed to be exhorted and encouraged to remain focused and to remain faithful in their ministry.

But, you know, as I said when we were looking at 1 Timothy, you know, we shouldn't be tempted into thinking that because 2 Timothy is just, is a personal and pastoral letter, that it's only applicable to pastors.

You know, even though it's a personal and pastoral letter, this letter would have been read publicly. And it would have been applied practically to the congregation.

We saw that in 1 Timothy, where Paul addressed all these issues. And he gave instructions relating to some of the pastoral problems that were current in Ephesus.

[7 : 43] In fact, we discovered in 1 Timothy, all these pastoral problems were problems actually with the pastors. Because the pastoral leadership in Ephesus was soft on sin.

They were loose on the law. They were just glossing over the gospel. And as we saw in 1 Timothy, there were so many problems that Timothy, he wanted to throw in the towel and walk away altogether.

But as this father figure in Timothy's life, Paul exhorted and he encouraged Timothy to stay there. Stay in Ephesus. Stay there, stand firm, and stay focused.

Lead your leadership. Lead them from being erroneous elders and disobedient deacons to being effective elders and devoted deacons. Stay there, stand firm, stay focused.

But, you know, when we come to 2 Timothy, the tone of the letter is different. Because this letter, it's not only personal and pastoral, it's also a precious letter.

[8 : 49] This is a precious letter because it's Paul's final letter. And, you know, of all people to write at the end of his life while Paul is waiting execution, Paul writes to Timothy.

He writes to this young minister. And as a parting message, Paul sought to remind and reassure Timothy of the firm foundations of the gospel.

And so Paul, he begins his final letter with those familiar words, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. There must have been a thought, Paul writing that for the last time.

He wrote it so often. He wrote it in all his letters. All his letters to these churches, to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. And now he writes it for the last time.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus. And, of course, Timothy, he knew who Paul was.

[9 : 55] He knew how Paul had become an apostle. Timothy was well aware of the fact that Paul had been dramatically converted on the road to Damascus and then called and commissioned to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

But now as Paul's Christian pilgrimage is drawing to a close, Paul is expressing and emphasizing to Timothy that he still has, he has the promise of life in Jesus Christ.

That's what he says. He has the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus. And he has that promise because he has come to experience and enjoy, verse 2, the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the face of death, he says, I have the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus. And we see that because he goes on in verse 3.

He says, And, you know, you read these verses and you'd never think, you'd never think that reading these verses, that Paul is on death row.

[11:20] He's sitting in a dark and dismal dungeon. He's awaiting his execution. And yet his attitude and his approach to his circumstances and the situation he finds himself in was to say those opening words in verse 3.

I thank God whom I serve. I thank God whom I serve. I don't know if any of us would say that if we were in Paul's shoes.

And yet Paul is saying, I thank God whom I serve. And yet it was because of the God he served that Paul was in prison. It was because he loved the Lord that Paul was separated from the church community.

It was because Paul had preached the gospel so faithfully and so fervently that he was being sentenced to death. And yet Paul here, he begins by saying, I thank God whom I serve.

You know, our attitude and our approach to serving the Lord, even for myself reading this, you know, it would be transformed if we had more of an attitude of gratitude.

[12:35] An attitude of gratitude rather than mumbling and grumbling. Our attitude and approach to serving the Lord would be transformed if we had more of an attitude of gratitude rather than mumbling and grumbling.

I thank God whom I serve. But you know, what I love is that Paul sees prayer. He sees prayer as service to the Lord. Paul sees prayer as service to the Lord.

He says, You know, Paul is remembering Timothy in prayer.

He's praying for this young minister and his ministry that the Lord would bless him and the Lord would keep him. And he says, I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day.

I remember your tears. I remember your trials. I remember your stresses and your strains and your struggles in Ephesus. I remember the ministry that you carry out and the message that you preach.

[13:50] Timothy, be assured, I'm praying for you. I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. But notice what he says there.

I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. You know, you think about it. The next time Paul would see Timothy would not be in this world.

It would only be in glory. I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. But until I see you, until I'm taken out of this world, Timothy, I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day.

And you know, my friend, you know, you might wonder tonight. You might think, well, what can I do in the service of the Lord? What can I do? What can I get involved in?

And you know, we often highlight when we're asked that question, even considering Isaiah, here am I, send me. You think, well, what can I do? You know, we often highlight what we can't do.

[14:58] But Paul highlights here what we can all do. We can all pray. We can all pray. We can all pray for the work, witness, and worship of the Lord.

We can all pray for the ministry, the message, and the mission of the gospel in our congregation and community. We can all pray. We can all tell each other what we can't do.

But Paul says, well, this is what we can all do. We can all pray. Yes, the church needs people to be practical in their service to the Lord. It's great to have them. But the church also needs people to pray as their service to the Lord.

I thank God whom I serve, he says, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. And so we see him, we see Paul remembering Timothy.

But then secondly, we see him reminding Timothy. So remembering Timothy and reminding Timothy. Reminding Timothy.

[16:00] Look at verse 5. He says, I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well.

For this reason, I remind you, fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. You know, much of what Paul writes in his final farewell letter to Timothy it's all based upon the fact that he has a close relationship with Timothy.

And you can see, you know, you can see the depth and the devotion of their relationship by the way in which Paul describes Timothy. He describes Timothy as you saw there in verse 2.

He calls him my beloved child. And then writing elsewhere in the New Testament about his relationship with Timothy, Paul says, I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. And of course, Paul wasn't Timothy's biological father, but he was his, we'll call him, his biblical father.

[17:17] He wasn't his biological father, but certainly his biblical father. Paul considered Timothy as a spiritual son, a spiritual son in the faith.

And as his spiritual father, Paul was someone who disciplined and disciplined Timothy. He disciplined and disciplined him from God's Word.

He challenged and confronted Timothy about his Christian character, his conduct, and his conversation. He exhorted and encouraged Timothy as a young Christian and as a young minister to be focused and faithful.

Focused and faithful to the gospel. And you know, just like Paul was to Timothy, you know, we need spiritual fathers and mothers in our day and generation.

We need older Christians. It was prevalent in the past, but we needed more in the present. We need older Christians to nurture and nourish us in faith and through fellowship.

[18:27] We need to come together. And we need it. We need it more than ever. We need to come together so that we will speak and share about our Christian experience.

Because that's what the word fellowship means. It means to share. We're to speak and share about our Christian experience so that together, as Peter says, together we will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

You know, as an older, more experienced Christian, Paul saw his role and responsibility. He saw it as a role and responsibility to ensure that young Timothy was loved and looked after.

First as a Christian, but also as a minister. He saw it as his role and responsibility because Paul knew that the time was coming as he got closer to his execution.

He knew that he would have to go and there would be no one to strengthen him. There would be no one to support him, which is why Paul wants to remind Timothy from the outset.

[19:38] He says, Timothy, you know, you had a good and godly grounding in the faith. You had a good and godly grounding in the faith. But it was not only Paul who had trained Timothy.

Timothy was also taught by his mother, we read there, and his grandmother. Timothy had the privilege of being brought up in a Christian home, where he had a firm foundation in the word of God.

And as we read Timothy, he had a Christian mother named Eunice, and a godly granny named Lois. And together they helped to shape and steer Timothy's life.

They were always pointing him in the right direction. And you know, even within the context of a Jewish home, which is what Eunice's home was, it was a Jewish home.

Timothy's mother and his grandmother, the granny, they would have begun and ended the day with prayer as they do, but they would have also recited the Shema. The opening words of Deuteronomy chapter 6, which every Jew recites morning and evening.

[20:48] Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these things shall be on your heart, and you shall teach them to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, and when you lie down, and when you get up.

You know, Timothy was someone who had a good and a godly grounding, being brought up in a Christian home. And you know, you bring it back to yourself.

And although many of us may have respected it, but rejected it at the time, when we look back tonight, we're so thankful for that influence.

We're so thankful for the impact that it was for us being brought up in a Christian home. Not everybody's had that privilege. And yet, for many of us tonight, we are a trophy of grace, because the Lord has worked in our heart, but we're thankful for those who prayed for us as children.

We're thankful that they pointed us to Jesus in our young years. And you know, I don't think we'll ever fully realize the precious privilege it is to be brought to church as a child, or to be made to attend Sunday school as a child.

[22 : 17] I don't think we'll ever fully realize the privilege it is to have mothers and fathers looking out for their children in a graceless and godless generation, to have godly grannies and spiritual shenners leading by example and praying for and with their grandchildren.

I don't think we'll ever fully realize the precious privilege it is to be brought up in a Christian home. But you know, we also shouldn't forget that similar to other homes in our community, Timothy's home had a separation because of the gospel.

Timothy had a Christian mother. He had a godly granny, but he also had an unconverted father. We don't know his name, but we do know we're told that he was a Greek.

It's assumed that he wasn't a Christian. And as you know, maybe only too well, there are homes like that in our congregation and in our community.

Homes with an unconverted husband or an unconverted wife or unconverted children, which is why we should always be mindful of them.

[23 : 32] We should be mindful of them and pray that these homes would experience and that they would enjoy union and communion in Christ, that they would come to know Jesus, that husbands and wives would be united, not just in marriage, but in Christ, and that children would know the great and precious promises of God's word, promises that are to us, as the Bible says, to us and to our children.

And so as Paul is reminding Timothy about his good and godly grounding in the gospel, he also reminds Timothy of his pastoral role and responsibility to ensure that the gospel baton is passed on to the next generation, so that our children and our children's children, they will also have a firm foundation in the gospel, and that as we were singing, generations yet unborn, will praise and magnify the Lord.

And the thing is, Paul knows that Timothy can, he can and he will do it, because as he says, he has a sincere faith. He has a sincere faith.

He says in verse 5, I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you, as well.

He has a sincere faith. And you know, that word sincere, it's a very interesting word, because it literally means unhyprocritical. Unhyprocritical.

[25 : 13] As you know, a hypocrite, or to be a hypocrite, is a very negative thing, because a hypocrite says one thing and does another. A hypocrite is a phony.

They're a fraud. They have a front, and they live a facade. They have a face. But someone who is unhyprocritical, which is, in many ways, is a double negative, which makes a strong positive.

Someone who is unhyprocritical, as Paul writes, they are sincere. They are genuine. They're heartfelt. They are honest.

And they are earnest. They're not someone with a holier-than-thou attitude. They're not double-minded and unstable in all their ways, as James says. They're not one person at worship and then another person at the workplace.

They're not someone who's all talk and no action. They're not someone who shows face to be seen, but not to serve. No, they're sincere. They're sincere in their faith.

[26 : 16] They're genuine in their desire. They're heartfelt. They're honest. They're earnest in their service to the Lord, which is immediately pointing at ourselves what we should strive to be as we pass on the gospel to the next generation.

And that's why Paul is reminding Timothy that he can and he will pass on the gospel baton to the next generation because he has a sincere faith.

He has a sincere faith. faith. He says, for this reason I remind you, fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Paul is reminding Timothy of his faith, his sincere faith and faithfulness, but also to fan into flame his gift as a pastor and a preacher.

He has received the laying on of hands. Timothy has been, he has been ordained to the ministry of the gospel and he has been given this gift as a pastor and a preacher and he's to fan it into flame.

[27 : 26] And in many ways, what Paul is saying to Timothy is just what he said to Timothy at the end of his last letter. He's just picking up where he left off because in 1 Timothy, Paul said to Timothy, he said, until I come, until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching, and do not neglect the gift you have which was given by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

Timothy, fan into flame the gift of God. Now, it's not that Timothy was neglecting his God-given gift as a pastor or a preacher. It's that Paul knew.

Paul knew that very soon he would no longer be able to exhort and encourage his friend Timothy as a pastor and preacher of the gospel.

Which is why Paul says in these opening words, he says, I'm remembering you, Timothy. I'm remembering you in prayer night and day.

And then he says, I want to remind you, Timothy, fan into flame the gift of God. Make sure your gift is being used correctly.

[28 : 46] Make sure you are burning brightly for the Lord. Be a focused pastor. Be a faithful preacher. Because I'm going soon. I'm going soon.

As he'll say at the end of his letter, I have fought a good fight. I have finished the course. I've kept the faith. There's a crown of righteousness laid up for me. I'm going soon.

And you know, 2nd Timothy, it's actually quite an emotional letter. When you read it in that context, it's Paul's last letter. It's the last words he ever wrote in this world.

It's an emotional letter because there's this transition moment. A transition moment, not just for Paul and Timothy, where Paul is passing on the baton to Timothy. But it's also a transition moment for the church.

It's a transition moment for the church. And as we said, there's this question which hangs over the letter. Timothy's wondering, well, what's going to happen to the church?

[29 : 53] What's going to happen to the church? church. And yet Jesus is building his church. And you know, it was my good friend J.C. Ryle. He answered that question, what's going to happen to the church?

He answered the question in his day and in his generation. And with this, I'll conclude. I'll give the final word to my good friend J.C. Ryle. What's going to happen to the church?

Ryle says, fear not. Fear not for the church of Christ when ministers die and saints are taken away. Christ can ever maintain his own cause. He will raise up better servants and brighter stars. The stars are all in his right hand. So leave off all anxious thought about the future.

Cease to be cast down by the measures of statesmen or the plots of wolves in sheep's clothing.

Christ will ever provide for his own church. Christ will take care that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

[31 : 00] All is going well, he says. All is going well, though our eyes may not see it. The kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ.

What's going to happen to the church? Jesus will keep building so that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for thy word that reminds us in our day and in our generation that except the Lord to build the house, the builders lose their pain.

Except the Lord, the city keep, the watchmen watch in vain. That it is vain for us to try and build the church of Jesus Christ without the king and head of it.

And Lord, we pray that we would always have Jesus first and foremost. That we would have him as the fairest among ten thousand and one who is altogether lovely.

[32 : 13] That we would follow in his footsteps as the captain of our salvation. Bless, Lord, thy truth to us. Remind us and reassure us this evening that Jesus is still building his church.

That people are still being added to the number. And that when the role is called up yonder, that there will be more in the church of Jesus Christ than there was in Paul's day.

O Lord, remind us anew tonight that even though it may look bleak, although we may be downcast and feeling apathetic, Lord, help us to know that Jesus is in control and he is working all things together for good to those who are the called according to his own purpose.

Do us good and we pray. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Well, we're going to sing again this time in Psalm 48.

Psalm 48, again in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 48. It's on page 273.

[33 : 33] Psalm 48. We're singing from verse 10 down to the end of the psalm. And after we sing, I'm going to invite two of the gentlemen to lead us in prayer.

A few of the prayer points that we usually highlight. The vacancies, I mean, I gave you a list of the vacancies. I'm sure you saw it. There's so many vacancies.

Thirteen in the Glasgow Presbytery. But we're highlighted to this week Livingston Free Church. So they're a vacant congregation. That's where Nigel Anderson was. Livingston, they're part of the Edinburgh Presbytery.

So please remember them, that the Lord would direct them and guide them during their vacancy. We're also encouraged to pray for Burghead. That's where Peter Turnbull is. We met him on Zoom one night.

He went to Burghead a number of years ago and he's working there serving the Lord. And there's also Elgin. There's talk of, I think they're going to link Elgin. Elgin has gone down in the last few years, so they're going to link it in order to build it up again.

[34 : 36] That's Presbyterianism. That is Presbyterianism at work. Linking two congregations to build them up and then separate them again so that they will be self-sufficient to keep going in their own community.

So please remember that those congregations, Burghead and Elgin, we're also encouraged to pray for the camps, the Free Church camps. There were some in the congregation who were at camps this year. So pray that the word will be blessed to these young lives.

You know, I don't know if you were ever at a camp yourself. Maybe you were, maybe you weren't, maybe you served at a camp. But you know they're great, what a great opportunity to share the gospel with young lives and impress upon them the truths of the scripture in their young years.

So just to highlight these few things to you. So we're going to sing Psalm 48. We're singing verses 10 down to the at the end of the psalm. Psalm 48, like Psalm 102, focuses upon the church.

It's focusing upon the church. And particularly the last two or three verses, where it says there in verse 12, walk about Zion. So go round your church. Walk about Zion.

[35 : 47] Go round. The high towers thereof tell. Consider ye her palaces, and mark her bulwarks well. So they've been told to walk around the city and where the temple was built.

And they were to do it. They were to consider the church. They were to consider the place of worship. Why? That ye may tell posterity, for this God doth abide, our God forevermore he will, in unto death us guide.

So that we would pass it on to the next generation. Just like we were considering in 2 Timothy, the importance of sharing it. Sharing the gospel with the next generation. So Psalm 48, singing from verse 10 down to the verse marked 14.

We'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. O Lord, according to Thy name, through all years, O Lord is full of righteousness always.

O Lord is full of righteousness always. O Lord is full of righteousness always.

[37 : 09] Because thy judgments are made known, O God is part of gospel.

O Lord is full of righteousness God set forth unto Christ. Come on may not sing such as facts shall testimonies.

Set forth a cheerful voice. Walk above Zion and go out.

The lighters they all tell. Consider ye her policies.

At work her course well. That ye may tell her certainty.

[38 : 32] For this God of the light. Our God forever.

For he will. He will unto death the sky.

God. Amen.eo.eo.eo.