

Dear Timothy...

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in 1 Timothy, 1 Timothy chapter 1.

And as we're beginning a study, we'll begin at the beginning. 1 Timothy chapter 1, reading from the beginning.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy, my true child in the faith, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Did you know that it is illegal to open someone else's mail?

It's also illegal to delay someone else's mail. And it's also illegal to destroy someone else's mail. According to the Postal Services Act in 2000, And it says that anyone caught opening, delaying, or destroying mail could receive a fine, or even worse, a two-year prison sentence.

[1 : 3 7] So if mail arrives at your home not addressed to you, make sure you write on it, return to sender, and stick it in the post. Thankfully, when Paul's first letter arrived at the manse in Ephesus, Timothy didn't return to sender.

And although this letter was addressed to Timothy personally, when he opened his mail, he shared the contents of this letter with his congregation.

And in many ways, he's also sharing it with us here this evening. As you know, unlike many of Paul's letters which are addressed to congregations in particular places, This letter is addressed to a particular person, or more specifically, a particular pastor.

And from the very outset of this letter, we can see that Paul's letter to Timothy was a very personal and a very pastoral letter. In fact, over the years, this letter has become known as one of the three pastoral letters of Paul.

There are three pastoral letters, 1 and 2 Timothy, and also Titus. And these pastoral letters, they were written near the end of Paul's life, with 2 Timothy actually being the last letter that Paul wrote prior to his execution by the Emperor Nero around the year 67 AD.

[2 : 5 9] And so in writing this letter, Paul knew that his ministry was drawing to a close. He knew that his ministry was coming to an end. He knew that he had fought a good fight. He had finished the course.

He had kept the faith. But you know, Paul, he didn't want to leave this world without, first of all, passing on his pastoral wisdom and experience to these two young men, Timothy and Titus.

And as a pastor himself, Paul sought to pastor the pastors, which is why he wrote these personal and pastoral letters to Timothy and to Titus.

And by this point in Paul's life, Titus was serving the Lord on the more, you could say, more rural charge on the Greek island of Crete.

While Timothy here, he was pastoring a congregation in the urban setting of the city of Ephesus. But regardless of their location, both pastors needed pastoring.

[3 : 58] Both pastors needed to be encouraged and exhorted to be faithful leaders in their day and generation. But you know, looking at this letter, we shouldn't be tempted into thinking that because this is a personal and pastoral letter that it's only applicable to pastors.

Far from it. Because when you read this letter, it contains good, sound advice for office bearers, for members, for adherents who are serving the Lord in their congregation and in their community.

In fact, the reason I felt directed to study this letter with you is because, as you know, as a congregation last year, we signed up to what they've called the church development track.

And we're signed up to it for two years. As I said before, I'm not really sure what's involved in it all. But I do know that throughout the year, I have to attend lectures and seminars in Edinburgh and Inverness.

But as office bearers, we are also encouraged to meet together to discuss various aspects of congregational life and congregational ministry.

[5 : 08] But also another reason for considering 1 Timothy was because I recently received and read this brilliant book called Faithful Leaders.

I won't tell you who gave it to me, but one of our elders did. The book is by Rico Tice. And you'll know the name Rico Tice. He is the face of Christianity Explored. And the book, it's a very recent book because it was written during the lockdown.

And I'd actually encourage you to read it. So buy this book. Buy Faithful Leaders and read it because it's a very readable book. And it's one in which is for everyone.

It's for everyone. Because as Rico Tice says himself in the book, We all want to be faithful leaders, whether preaching from a pulpit or around the family table at home.

We all want to be faithful leaders, whether preaching from a pulpit or around the family table at home. And God willing, as office bearers, I haven't raised this with them yet, but they're getting it now.

[6 : 10] I hope for us to read this book together as office bearers and discuss some of the questions that are raised in the back of it. Because it's full of pastoral and full of practical advice in this book.

And it's also full of the pastoral and practical advice that Paul is giving here in this letter. And so this evening, I want us just to consider the opening introduction of Paul's letter to Timothy.

And we can look at it very simply under two headings, the writer and the recipient. The writer and the recipient. They're not quite alliterative, but they're close enough.

So first of all, the writer. We read there in verse 1. It says, Now I think it's safe to say that the majority of the New Testament has been written by the Apostle Paul.

As you know, there are 27 New Testament books in the Bible. And at least 13 of them are attributed to the hand or to the dictation of the Apostle Paul.

[7 : 21] The letters of Paul that are undisputed are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

But it has also been long disputed that Paul was the author of the letter to the Hebrews. Some people say he was. Some people say he wasn't.

There have also been discussions and debates over the years that Paul actually wrote four letters to the Corinthians and not two. Where 1 Corinthians is actually 2 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians is actually 4 Corinthians.

So there are four letters, as it's suggested, four letters to the Corinthians and not two. There's also a letter that was written to the Laodiceans, which Paul told their neighbors, the Colossians, to read.

And so if all this is accurate, when you tally it all up, Paul could have written at least 17 letters to both pastors and people. And he wrote them throughout his ministry.

[8 : 29] And remarkably, Paul did it all without a laptop, without Microsoft Word, and without email. But you know, when Paul wrote this personal and pastoral letter to Timothy, he began the way he always begins his letters.

He began by asserting and affirming that he is the writer of this letter. As you know, whenever we write a letter or type an email or even sometimes send a text, we always begin with the recipient.

We say, dear, so and so. We begin with the recipient rather than the writer. We begin with who it's to rather than who it's from. And you'd expect Paul to do the same.

You'd expect him to begin this personal and pastoral letter with the words, dear Timothy. Dear Timothy. But instead, we see that Paul begins with the writer rather than the recipient.

He begins with who the letter is from rather than who the letter is to. And that's just because that's the way they did it in the ancient world. You always began with the writer rather than the recipient.

[9 : 37] As well, as Paul introduces himself, he does so by asserting and affirming his office in the church of Jesus Christ. He says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus.

He says that he's an apostle of Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus. And actually, in nine of his New Testament letters, Paul defines and he describes himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

And as you probably know, the term apostle literally means sent one. It refers to someone who was sent out to do a specific task.

And it was used in the early church to define and to describe those who were personally sent by the king and head of his church, Jesus Christ. Which is what happened to Paul.

Because along with the twelve apostles who were called, commissioned, and commanded to go out into all the world and preach the gospel. That was the great commission at the end of Matthew. Paul was also someone specifically to the Gentiles.

[10 : 43] As you know from Acts chapter 9, Paul, or Saul as he was then, he was met on the road to Damascus by the Lord. And it was there on the road to Damascus that Paul was dramatically converted and the Lord changed the course of his life.

And as an apostle, the Lord saved and sent Paul as a chosen vessel to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. You know what's amazing about this word apostle is that before it was used in church circles, we'll say.

In the ancient world, an apostle was viewed as an ambassador. As an emissary. And that's why you see all these words appearing in the New Testament.

Paul saw himself as not only an apostle, but as a representative of both king and country. And Paul saw his role and responsibility as an apostle.

He saw himself as an ambassador of Christ, an emissary of Jesus. And that's what Paul confesses time and time again in his letters.

[11 : 55] He says that he's an apostle of Christ Jesus by the commandment of God our Savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ our hope.

And when you actually read all of Paul's letters, he repeatedly reminds us and reaffirms to us and reasserts to us and his readers that he has been called, commissioned, and commanded to be this apostle.

He's an ambassador for Christ. He's an emissary of King Jesus. He's a representative of the King of Heaven. But you know, my friend, although we are not, strictly speaking, apostles of Jesus Christ, we are, however, as Paul tells us in the New Testament, we are ambassadors for Christ.

We are emissaries of King Jesus. Our citizenship is in heaven. Therefore, we are representatives of the kingdom of heaven. And you know, it was actually the commentator, Michael Bentley, he says in his commentary, in a very real sense, every Christian man, woman, and child is an ambassador of the Lord.

Therefore, he says, it is our task to represent our King to our workmates, our relatives, our friends, and our acquaintances. We should be the means whereby Christ is made known to other people.

[13 : 21] And we should always remember that we are constantly on the King's business. We are constantly on the King's business. He says, people are always watching us. So we must never let down the good name of Christ by becoming involved in anything which is dishonoring to our Lord.

We should regularly ask ourselves, can I take Christ with me in here? Can I take Christ with me in here? And then he makes this hard-hitting comment.

And I take it to myself as he did himself. He says, I suspect that most of us, myself included, are not performing this role very diligently.

I suspect that most of us are not performing this role of ambassador very diligently. You know, my Christian friend, we should never forget.

And it's so easy to forget when we get caught up in the busyness of a day. But we are ambassadors for Christ. We are emissaries of King Jesus. We are representatives of the kingdom of heaven.

[14 : 29] And, you know, that's what Paul wants to remind Timothy in this letter. That's what he wants to remind him. Because there are things that Paul is going to raise with Timothy that will confront and challenge many areas of the church of Jesus Christ.

In fact, throughout this letter, Paul draws attention to five areas. Five areas. He draws attention to the problems of the church, the importance of prayer, the positions of leadership, passion for truth, and pastoring patiently.

As the writer of this letter, Paul gives us, we'll say he gives us five Ps. Problems, prayer, positions, passion, and pastoring. And these five Ps, they were written to this young man, Timothy.

They were written to the recipient, Timothy. Which is whom I'd like to consider secondly. So the recipient, the writer, verse 1, and the recipient, verse 2.

Where Paul says, To Timothy, my true child in the faith, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

[15 : 55] You know, when we first meet Timothy on the pages of Scripture, we meet him in Acts chapter 16. Paul was on his second of three missionary journeys when he and Silas, they arrive in the town of Lystra in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey.

And it's there that Paul meets this young and enthusiastic disciple called Timothy. And we're told that Timothy was well-spoken of by his church and that Paul wanted Timothy to join him on his missionary journeys.

And he did. And in his commentary, the late John Stott, he suggests that Timothy was in his late teens or early 20s when he left his home in Lystra to join Paul and Silas in their endeavors to preach the gospel and plant new churches.

And for the best part of 14 years, Timothy serves alongside Paul as what you could call a ministry apprentice or a minister in training.

You know, we think that these buzzwords in our denomination, ministry apprentice and minister in training, we think that they're a new concept or we want to present them as a new concept. But they're not.

[17 : 09] Because these buzzwords are biblical words. They've been around since the beginning and the birth of the church of Jesus Christ. The free church is just, in many ways, just catching up.

And so by the time Timothy was inducted into this urban charge in the city of Ephesus, he was around my age. Timothy was in his mid-30s, which was a relatively young minister.

I will say that. He's of a relatively young age to be a minister in a congregation. And, you know, as a young man, Timothy, he felt his youth.

He felt inexperienced. He felt immature for the heavy responsibility that was being placed upon his shoulders. And Paul knew that.

Paul knew that Timothy felt too young to be a minister, which is why he reminds Timothy and Titus. He reminds them in both letters. He says, let no one despise you for your youth.

[18 : 12] Let no one despise you for your youth. But as a young minister, Timothy was like all ministers. Timothy was like all ministers. And as a pastor to pastors, Paul was aware that this young man needed to be exhorted, and he needed encouragement in the work of the gospel.

And, you know, when you look at this young man, Timothy, I think that most of us would relate to Timothy better than we would relate to Paul. Because, as you know, Paul was the kind of guy who was bold in his faith.

He was always out and out for the Lord. He was very outspoken. Paul had this desire, this determination, this drive and dedication for the Lord's cause.

He was the kind of Christian that you would immediately feel intimidated by and inferior to. But Timothy, well, I think he's someone that we can all relate to.

Because Timothy was timid. Timothy was shy. Timothy was a naturally reserved person. You could probably say Timothy was an introvert.

[19 : 24] But the thing about Timothy was that he was aware of his weaknesses. And it's always good to be aware of your weaknesses. And Timothy was aware of this weakness where he was so shy and so timid.

Which is why Timothy would push himself. He would push himself out of his comfort zone. He would push himself out of his holy huddle.

He would push himself out of his spiritual bubble. He would push himself out in order to make sure and to seek to serve the Lord. And you know, my Christian friend, we should do the same.

We should acknowledge our weaknesses. But push ourselves so that we are seeking to serve the Lord. Because I think that we're more like Timothy than we realize.

We're also like Timothy because Timothy was someone who had the privilege of being brought up in a Christian home. Which is the privilege that many of us have had.

[20 : 28] Timothy had a good grounding in the Word of God. He had a Christian mother named Eunice. He had a godly granny named Lois. And they both helped to shape and to steer Timothy.

They shaped and steered his Christian character, conduct, and conversation. And you know, I don't think we will ever fully realize the precious privilege it is to be brought up in a Christian home.

And to have Christian people around us. Christian parents and grandparents. To have mothers and fathers in Israel looking out for their children. Growing up in a graceless and godless generation.

To also have godly grannies and we'll call them spiritual shenners. Praying over their grandchildren. It's such a privilege. And like Timothy, it was a great privilege that we had to be brought up with the gospel.

But you know, now looking at the role that we have. The age that we're at. It's our role. It's now our responsibility. To be the mother and father in Israel.

[21 : 40] It's our role and responsibility to be the godly granny and the spiritual shenner. It's our role and responsibility to pass on the truth to the next generation. Just like Timothy's mother and grandmother passed on the truth to him.

But you know, similar to many homes in our community. Timothy's home had a separation because of the gospel. Timothy had an unconverted father.

We don't know his name. We know that he was a Greek. And it's assumed that he wasn't a Christian. And as you know, maybe only too well. There are many homes like that.

Homes with an unconverted husband or an unconverted wife. Homes with an unconverted father or mother. And there's this separation because of the gospel.

And you know, my Christian friend, I think of you so often. Those of you who have unconverted wives and unconverted husbands. Unconverted children. Pray for you so often.

[22 : 48] And you know, we should all continue to pray and plead with you and for you. That your home will come to experience and enjoy union and communion in Christ.

But you know, Timothy, we're told here, he was not only a physical son to Eunice and to Lois. But he was also a spiritual son to Paul.

Paul calls him a true son in the faith or a true child in the faith. Timothy was someone Paul had witnessed grow. He had witnessed him grow in grace.

And as a spiritual father to Timothy, Paul, he was someone who assumed the role and the responsibility of nurturing him and nourishing him in the faith.

Paul disciplined Timothy. He disciplined Timothy. He taught and told Timothy about the Christian faith. He challenged and confronted him about the Christian life.

[23 : 50] Paul exhorted and encouraged Timothy in his Christian character, his conduct, his conversation, both as a person and also as a pastor. And you know, as spiritual fathers and mothers, as an older Christian here tonight, is there someone that you disciple?

Is there someone that you look out for? Is there someone that you get alongside? Is there someone that you ask now and again, how are you getting on?

How are you getting on in your walk with the Lord? And even as spiritual sons and daughters, maybe you're younger in the faith, is there someone looking out for you?

And if there's not, maybe seek someone to look out for you. Is there someone discipling you? Because, you know, that's the Great Commission. The Great Commission is not to go and make converts of all the nations.

No, the Great Commission is to go and make disciples of all nations. And so we're to disciple one another. We're to exhort and encourage one another in holiness.

[25 : 03] We're to nurture and nourish one another in our Christian character, conduct, and conversation. And you know, this is, it's so important. There was someone in my life who was just like Paul to me.

He lives in Kinloch. He's the minister in Kinloch. He disciplined me. He exhorted me. He encouraged me. He nurtured me. He nourished me with the gospel.

He reminded me about the importance of the Christian character, conduct, and conversation. And it reminds us about the importance of doing that, to teach and tell one another, to seek and strive to bear fruit.

To bear fruit in our lives. And you know, that's why Paul wrote this personal and pastoral letter to Timothy. Because as a young minister, Timothy was facing, as we'll see as we go through the letter, he was facing all sorts of problems.

He was facing lots of pressures. He was facing challenges. He was facing conflicts from within the church and even from without the church, outside the church.

[26 : 13] But you know, Paul's love for Timothy and Paul's longing for Timothy is that together they would know, as he says in the end of verse 2, they would know grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

And you know, that should be the foundation of our congregation. That we love one another. That we look out for one another. That we long for one another.

To know grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. So there's an introduction to 1 Timothy.

And God willing, we'll continue our study next Wednesday evening. So may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we give thanks to Thee for Thy Word.

And we thank Thee, Lord, that it is a rule to direct us, the only rule to direct us, on how we may glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And we pray that as we study this letter together, that we would be disciplined.

[27 : 29] That we would be taught in order to teach others. That we would be trained in order to train others. That we would be disciplined in order to disciple others. And Lord, we confess how far short we fall.

But we pray that we would have a teachable spirit. That we would be willing to learn. To learn to be more like Jesus. To walk in His footsteps. And to keep in step with Him.

Lord, remember us, we pray. Remember homes and families, as we said, that are separated by the Gospel. Whether our husbands out of Christ tonight. Whom we would long for them to be here with us.

And wives that are still strangers to grace and to God. Oh Lord, how we would want them to be here as well. And even our children and our children's children.

We pray that Thy righteousness would extend to them. That they too would know the great and precious promises. That are found in Thy Word. Oh Lord, be faithful, we pray.

[28 : 31] And that Thou wouldst hear us and answer our prayers. That Thou, Lord, in Thy grace and in Thy mercy. That Thou wouldst move among our homes and in our families. To draw sinners to Thyself.

Bless us, we pray. Uphold us, we ask. Go before us and keep us. For we ask it in Jesus' name. And for His sake. Amen. We're going to sing again.

This time in Psalm 119. Psalm 119. We're singing from verse 9 down to the verse marked 12.

Psalm 119. Psalm 119. And verse 9. And these verses, I mean, they speak very clearly about, if you apply them to Timothy as a young man.

By what means shall a young man learn his way to purify? And the answer is given, if he according to Thy word, there too attentive be. Unfeignedly, they have I sought with all my soul and heart.

[29 : 43] O let me not from the right path of Thy commands depart. Thy word I in my heart have hid, that I offend not Thee. O Lord, Thou ever blessed art.

Thy statutes teach Thou me. These verses of Psalm 119. To God's praise. By what means shall the young man, His way to purify.

If the Lord, it be according to Thy word, there too attentive be.

based host and the young man continues. By a word, it be on God haced. I sought with all my soul and heart.

Oh, let me not from the right path of thine commands depart.

[31 : 15] Thy word I in my heart admit, that I offend not thee.

O Lord, thou ever blessed art. Thy statutes teach of me.

Thy statutes teach of me.