Run the race

Paul’s second letter to Timothy
1. Introduction

When Paul wrote this letter he knew that he had run his race. He was in prison and he knew that his time had come for him to depart and to be with the Lord. He told his younger colleague that he had fought the good fight and finished the race and kept the faith. Unfortunately that could not be said of all the believers. Paul writes that everyone in the province of Asia had deserted the apostle (1:15) and some had wandered away from the faith (2:17-18). Paul wrote this letter to his younger colleague to encourage Timothy to endure hardship and persevere in the ministry of the gospel so that he might go on running the race all the way to the finish line. This letter continues today to be a great encouragement to all of us to keep on running the race that Lord has set before us.
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1. Guard the good deposit
2 Timothy 1:1-14

Introduction

Have you ever had to look after something for another? Has anyone left anything in your care for safe keeping? What was entrusted to you to look after and what did you do to ensure that it was guarded appropriately?

In the introduction to this letter the author calls upon his young fellow worker to guard the good deposit that had been entrusted to him. In this study we will see what it was that had been entrusted to Timothy and what he was expected to do in order to guard it and what we need to do in order to guard the good deposit that has been entrusted to us.

Greetings

In the opening verses of ancient letters the author usually introduced himself or herself and who it was
that they were writing to. Please read verses 1 to 2 to work out more about the author and who he was writing to.

1. Who wrote this letter and to whom was written to? Please look up the following verses to understand the circumstances of the author at the time of writing (1:8; 1:15; 1:1; 2:9 4:6-8; 4:9-10; 4:16-17).

2. What was the relationship between the author and the person that this letter is addressed to (Acts 16:1-3)?

3. What does Paul say that Timothy had received and how did he come to possess these things (c.f. 1:9)?

Think about it

How did Paul come to be an apostle of Christ Jesus?
What was the message that Paul had been entrusted with as an apostle?

Fan into flame

Paul immediately told Timothy that he was regularly praying for him and what he had been praying for with respect to Timothy. Please read verses 3 to 7 to understand what Paul thought was important for his young colleague.

4. What was the apostle Paul thanking God for when he remembered Timothy in his prayers?

5. What did Paul remind Timothy to do?
6. How had God already equipped him to do exactly this (c.f. 1:14)?

Think about it

What is Paul encouraging to Timothy to do (c.f. 4:5)?

Who should be getting on with this sort of ministry today?

What encouragement is there for Timothy to get on doing this?

How might this be an encouragement to all of us to get on with the things God has given us to do?
Do not be ashamed

Paul teases out what getting on with the ministry of the gospel will mean for Timothy in verses 8 to 12. Please read these verses.

7. What isn’t Timothy to be ashamed of?

8. What was Timothy to join the apostle in and why?

9. Why was Paul not ashamed to suffer for the gospel?

Think about it

Paul briefly outlines the gospel message that he was appointed to be a herald of and that he wasn’t ashamed of in these verses. What do we learn here about the heart of this message and why we preach it?
Why do you think we might to be tempted to be ashamed of the gospel? Do you think this temptation is common?

If we are ashamed and are not willing to join in suffering for the gospel or to associate with those who do, what do you think that might say about us?

How do we encourage one another to not be ashamed to testify to our LORD?

Guard the good deposit

Paul concludes these verses by telling Timothy to guard the good deposit that had been entrusted to him. Please read verse 13 and 14 to understand what had been entrusted to Timothy and what he was to do with it.
10. What had been Timothy been entrusted with and how was he to guard it?

Think about it

Paul in these verses has been encouraging Timothy to not be ashamed to testify to our LORD. This is what Paul had done and later, towards the end of the letter, he will say that he had fought the good fight and had finished the race and that what was now in store for him was a crown of righteousness (see 4:6-7).

What encouragement has he given Timothy to keep on running the race and not give up?

What do you have to believe if you are to go on running it?

What help do we have in running the race?
2. Be strong
2 Timothy 1.15 - 2.14

Introduction

Have you ever been let down by someone you regarded as a close friend? How did you feel at the time? How have you managed to move beyond this?

The apostle Paul had been let down in a really big way by the believers in Asia Minor. He wrote to Timothy that everyone in the province of Asia had deserted him. Even though this must have been extremely disappointing for the apostle, Paul managed to endure the hardships and keep on running the race and keep the faith. In these verses the apostle Paul tells Timothy that he needed to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. In this study we will look at the sort of strength or endurance that Timothy would need to keep on running his race.
Deserted

Before looking at what Paul told Timothy to do please read verses 15 to 18 from chapter 1 to better understand the circumstances that the apostle Paul had been through.

1. The believers of Asia Minor had abandoned the apostle but it would seem that the household of Onesiphorus had been the exception. How had Onesiphorus responded to Paul’s circumstances and why was he so different?

2. What does Paul pray for with respect to Onesiphorus?

Think about it

Why do you think Paul mentioned and reminded Timothy of Onesiphorus?
Be strong

Paul is encouraging Timothy to be strong and not be ashamed the gospel. Please read verses 1 to 7 to understand what Paul said would be involved in Timothy being strong in the grace of the LORD Jesus.

3. What was Timothy to entrust to others and to whom was he to entrust?

4. Timothy has already been exhorted to join Paul in suffering for the gospel. In these verses he again encourages him to join with him in enduring hardship. In what way was he to be like a good soldier? What does a good soldier do and not do?

5. Paul also compares the endurance that that Timothy is to display to that of an athlete running the race. In what way is Timothy to be like an athlete?

6. What is it that the hardworking farmer is waiting for?
Think about it

Timothy is told to reflect on these things for the Lord would give him insight into them. Please reflect further on these things by answering the following questions.

What was the job that Timothy was to get on with?

How was Timothy to avoid getting entangled in the things of this world?

Enduring hardship means waiting patiently. Why do people give up waiting?

What are we waiting for? What is our hope in (c/f 1:9-12)?
Remember

In this section Paul explains why he endured everything that he suffered and it had to do with the gospel he preached, which he encouraged young Timothy to remember. Please read verses 8 to 13.

7. What did Paul remind Timothy about the gospel?

8. Why was Paul enduring the suffering that came his way on account of the gospel?

9. The gospel is trustworthy. You can rely on it. What does the gospel promise those who endure hardship on its account and what does it promise those who don’t?

10. What is Timothy told to do with these things that he has been reminded of?
Think about it

None of us are strong enough in ourselves to endure hardship. Our strength is found in the grace of our LORD Jesus Christ that is in the gospel. Even though Paul was in chains he says that the gospel isn’t in chains.

How does remembering the gospel that has been entrusted to us encourage you to endure the hardship?

Others might prove unreliable; but why won’t Jesus let us down?

How are we to encourage one another to be strong?
3. Be faithful  
2 Timothy 2:14-26

Introduction

All of us from time to time have had to call a plumber or an electrician or take our car to a mechanic to get fixed. What are the qualities that you would look for in a good tradesperson and that would see you recommend them to others?

In this section Paul tells Timothy to do his best to see that he is the sort of workman that God would approve of. Please read verses 14 to 26 of chapter 2 to work out what the LORD is looking for in his servant and what makes us useful to the Master.

An approved worker

In verses 14 to 19 Paul told Timothy what he needed to do to be a workman that the LORD approved of and he also gives some examples of those that he would not have approved of. Please read these verses to figure out
the sort of worker we need to be in order to not be ashamed.

1. What sort of things was Timothy to remind others of?

2. Why was he to warn them against quarrelling about words?

3. Instead of trying to win arguments what was Timothy to be concerned for?

4. What was Timothy to avoid and why (c.f. 1 Timothy 1:3-7)?

5. What had happened to Hymenaeus and Philetus?
Think about it

In what way does a faithful worker correctly handle the truth?

The fact that Alexander and Hymenaeus had wandered away from the faith might have been a surprise for many but it wasn’t a surprise for the Lord. Why wasn’t the LORD surprised by it?

What is the solid foundation that stands firm?

An instrument for noble purposes

An approved worker will also be an instrument in the hand of the Lord for noble purposes. Please read verses 20 to 26 where Paul goes into more detail.
6. What does someone need to do to be an instrument for noble purposes?

7. What does someone wanting to be useful to the Master avoid and what do they pursuing?

8. How is he to treat those he is instructing?

9. What is the faithful servant’s goal in correcting and teaching others?

10. What is the devil’s objective in seeing people wander away from the truth?
Think about it

Paul’s words suggest that all those who call on the LORD out of a pure heart will be seeking to be instruments for noble purposes – holy and useful to the Master.

How can we be useful to the Master?

What are the evil desires of youth that we need to flee?

Why doesn’t arguing and quarrelling work?

Spend some time praying for those who have wandered from the faith. Pray that God might cause them to come to their senses and repent.
4. Be Careful
2 Timothy 3:1-17

Introduction

What were your school days like? Were they what some refer to as “the good old days” or where they terrible times for you? What made them so good or so bad for you?

In chapter 3 Paul writes to Timothy that there will be terrible times in these last days. He wanted him to be careful. He wanted him to be aware of this explaining what these terrible times would be like and how he was to live a godly life throughout the rough times ahead.

Terrible times

In verses 1 to 9 Paul explains why there will be terrible times in the last days. Please read these verses to understand the times that we are living in and why there will be some terrible times.
1. Why will there be terrible times in the last days?

2. Paul gives a long list of what the people will be like in these terrible times. Paul begins the list by saying that they are lovers of self (3:2) and ends the list telling us that they aren’t lovers of God (3:4). How are the things in the list related to the fact that people are lovers of self rather than lovers of God?

3. What seems particular significant about these terrible times is that there will be those who will claim to have some form of godliness but will deny the power of godliness. In what way do they deny its power?

4. These sorts of people will seek to lead other astray. Paul gives one example of those who he felt were particularly vulnerable to their influence. What made this group particularly susceptible to their dangers?
5. Jannes and Jambres are not referred to in any other book of the Bible. In Jewish thought when this letter was written it was believed that these were the names of the magicians in Pharaoh’s court who had opposed Moses. In what way were these men like those who were worming their way into the homes of weak-willed women?

Think about it

The last days will be terrible times. What do we need to watch out for within our own hearts in these days?

What sort of people are particular susceptible to the influences around them in these times?

How are we to respond to those who claim to have some form of godliness, but in what they teach they end up denying the truth?
Living in these times

Timothy is not to be taken in by those who don’t know the truth but rather to continue in what he had learned. Please read verses 10 to 17 to understand what Paul says about living in these times.

6. What did Timothy already know about the apostle and what things could Timothy expect?

7. How was Timothy to live in such times as this?

8. Why are the Scriptures so important for those living in these times?

9. How do the Scriptures equip the believer to live in these times?
Think about it

Living in the last days will not be easy for there will be some terrible times for those wanting to live a godly life but the LORD is faithful and will deliver us as he has delivered the apostle Paul.

Would use say that the days that we live in are terrible times? Why or why not?

What should we be expecting in these days in which we live?

What does the LORD provided us with to bring us through these times?

What do the Scriptures keep on encouraging you to do during these times?
5. Fight the good fight
2 Timothy 4:1-22

Introduction

What duty or responsibility have you been given to take care of? How did you go at carrying out the duty?

Paul gives Timothy a solemn charge in verses 1 to 8. It sums up what he has been urging Timothy to do throughout this letter. Timothy had been told to fan into flame the gift of God and (1:6) not to be ashamed of the gospel. In this last chapter Paul returns to exhorting Timothy to get on with the job he had been given to do. In this closing chapter he again reminds Timothy what it was that he had been entrusted to do and uses himself as an example of one who had run the race and had kept the faith and completed the task he had been entrusted with. Please read this chapter.
Preach the word (1-8)

Please read these verses to understand what Timothy was being called to do and what was involved in him fulfilling what he had been charged with.

1. Why was Timothy to take this charge seriously?

2. What does Paul charge Timothy to do and what would it involve?

3. Why would Timothy need great patience?

4. Timothy is told to keep his head in all situations. What did the apostle mean by this?
5. Why was Paul's own situation even more reason for Timothy to get on and discharge his duty?

Think about it

What do you think Paul means when he said that he had kept the faith?

What do you think Paul was saying that it would mean for Timothy?

What do you think that it means for you to keep the faith and run the race to the end?

Why is the coming of the LORD Jesus motivation to all of us to keep running the race?
Come quickly (9-22)

Having charged Timothy to exercise his duty as a minister of the gospel he tells Timothy to do his best to come quickly. Please read verses 9 to 22 to understand why he wanted Timothy to come and what Timothy needed to watch out for.

6. Why was Timothy to do his best to come quickly?

7. What did Timothy need to watch out for?

8. What support had Paul had at his first defence and how confident was Paul at the time he wrote?
Think about it

Demas had once been a gospel associate of Paul (cf. Colossians 4:14) but Demas had deserted Paul because he had loved the world. What do you think was wrong with loving the world and why would it cause him to abandon the apostle?

How important do you think the support of others is to the carrying out of our duty to the LORD?

What deliverance do you think that we can expect in this world?

How is it possible for people like us to fight the good fight and finish the race?