

2Timothy 24-08-14b

Let's pick up our study now in 2 Timothy chapter 1, and a lot of what we have been looking at in this introduction is emphasis on the context of what Paul is going to tell Timothy. And it's a mixture. You think about the nature of the Lord Jesus.

He is deity and humanity. He is a friend of sinners. He has personality.

He has empathy. He has compassion. He weeps over Jerusalem, but he is also the Son of God and the Messiah and the Lord.

And all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth. And he is going to judge the living and the dead and the judgment seat of Christ. And in the same way, we have a mixture of roles or a mixture of identity.

And so we have both formal responsibilities. We have a place in an authority structure or in a marriage or in a relationship or in a family or at a job. And we also have our personal connections and opportunities and responsibilities.

And many times our daily life is an effort to observe good priorities in the blend of those two things. When am I on the clock, so to speak, and as much as I might want to visit with someone in my family or comfort them or encourage them, it's the workday and I have a responsibility to my employer or to my clients or my patients or whatever it might be. And trying to find that balance is reflected here with Paul.

Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is talking to the pastor of a church and someone who is going to carry on the formal ministry of the gospel and of the word of God under difficult circumstances. That's the mission.

That's the purpose and that's the goal. But Paul is also very personally involved with Timothy as the son that he never had. There's no indication that Paul was ever married.

People have speculated that to be a Pharisee you had to be married and that Paul might have been married at an earlier time and maybe she died. But it's pure speculation. Paul says, I have the right to lead about a wife as do the other apostles, but I don't.

No indication that he ever had any actual children of his own. So Timothy and Titus, we know for certain, were like sons to Paul. And so he has a very personal concern.

So how do you encourage and exhort both on the formal side from an apostle to a pastor and on the personal side as a father figure. You know, Timothy's own father was a Greek and apparently not on the scene. It was Timothy's mother and grandmother who raised him in the Jewish faith and then later brought him to Christ.

And so this spiritual side and emotional, personal side, both are mixed. And you see that

in these opening verses. Just read this.

Paul doesn't begin. When Paul, your spiritual father in the faith and, you know, the guy who likes you best, it's Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus. Both of those should be Christ Jesus.

I'm reading my unmodified New King James there, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus. And this tells us something. When there is this combination, we have to remember first and foremost who we are and why we're here.

There is often a tension between our identity in Christ, our spiritual responsibilities, opportunities, challenges, and assignments, and the personal, our relationship involvements, our families, our friends, our co-workers, those that we are in contact with. And there is often emotional involvement, emotional entanglement. There's history, there's good blood, there's bad blood, there's grudges being held, or there's, you know, celebratory, a shared experience, and so on.

And it can get very muddy and very complex. This part of the word of God is very clear. As we're going to see in these next few verses, Paul has an intense personal love for Timothy.

But he is also his father in the faith. And as an apostle, it is Paul's job to make sure that Timothy is thoroughly equipped for every good work by possessing the word of God. So, Paul has to observe both sides with a priority on the spiritual.

And any time there is a conflict or tension between our spiritual identity and our responsibilities as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, representing him as his body on this earth, that has to come first. This is why Jesus said, I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. This is one of those seeming contradictions.

Isn't one of Jesus' titles the Prince of Peace? He's the Prince of Peace, right? But he says, I've not come to bring peace. Paul says to Timothy, grace, mercy, and peace to you from the Father and the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus. Grace and peace.

So Jesus does come to bring peace. He accomplishes peace. He is our peace, having reconciled us to God.

And yet he says, I've not come to bring peace, but a sword. What does he mean by that? In the context, as you continue, when he's talking about that, he says, I have come to divide households. And maybe we should turn to that to be sure my memory doesn't betray me here.

But if you turn back in the Gospels to Matthew 10, 34 through 36, Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 10, this is that tension. Ideally, there would always be peace and people could

say, well, how this can't be right. How can Jesus possibly say he has not come to bring peace when he's got all of these other passages that implicate him in bringing and sponsoring and authoring and sending peace? Well, Matthew 10, verse 34.

Do not think that I come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter in law against her mother in law, and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.

So what is the nature of this discord? What is the nature of the peace? When there is peace, it is because there is shared enthusiasm for God and for the Lord Jesus. But Jesus didn't come so that there's peace at any price, peace at any cost. Make whatever compromise you have to so that you don't separate from those you love the most and are closest to.

He says, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. There is peace on earth for whom? Men of goodwill, those who share that choice of God's goodness are going to have peace with one another, unity, harmony. It's the third part of the fruit of the spirit, isn't it? Love, joy, peace.

But remember in the one another realm of love, that type of love, that category of love has to be reciprocal. Love one another. That means each of us loves the other and that love is returned.

Neighbor love, you can love your neighbor or you can love your enemy. He may not love you back. They may not return or reciprocate.

That is not one another. That's the outer ring. That's beyond the one another.

In the same way, we should have the spirit of unity and the bond of peace, as Paul calls it, in the one another realm. You can have someone of your own household who is not a one another. That's what Jesus is saying.

A man's enemies will be the members of his own household. Enemy love, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you, is going to be the policy, but it is not one another love because it is not reciprocated. And in that sense, there is a sword.

There is a division. So we recognize that there is both a physical relationship, a physical presence, a physical household, and there is a spiritual identity, a spiritual relationship, spiritual household. The household of faith is not necessarily overlapping with the physical household.

That's what Jesus is talking about here. Do not think that I have come to bring universal peace. Peace on earth.

There is peace on earth for a subset of men, those of goodwill, one another love and spiritual household peace and unity and harmony is in the subset of those who are of goodwill, those who by faith and patience inherit the promises, those who share and are bearing the fruit of the spirit, those who abide in the vine. All of the synonyms, those who are walking the narrow road, those who are walking by means of the spirit, and so on. So you can put in the margin of 2 Timothy chapter 1, this Matthew 10, 34 through 36 and 37.

He who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it. He who loses his life for my sake will find it.

It's counterintuitive. It is at the point that we are willing to recognize sacrifices that are necessary to make that God will supply. Remember in another place where Jesus tells the disciples that when they say, well, we've given up all to follow you.

And he says, those who have given up father or mother or houses or lands are going to have a hundredfold. But it may not be in the physical realm. It will be in the kingdom.

It will be in the spiritual realm. So in 2 Timothy, Paul is going to switch back and forth between the official and the formal and the necessary for Timothy's function as a pastor and the personal and the emotional and the relationship that they have had of longstanding of deep friendship. So he says in verse 3, I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience.

God whom I serve with a pure conscience. Remember the weeks we spent on conscience. 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 15, the goal of our instruction, actually it's 1.5, the purpose of the commandment.

The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. 1.15 is the first of the five worthy sayings, but 1.5 is the pure heart, good conscience, and genuine faith. So Paul says here, I thank God.

I serve him with a pure conscience. It's kind of a combination of pure heart and the good conscience. A pure conscience, as my forefathers did.

This is a very interesting phrase. I'm not going to agonize over the Greek, but you notice there's some italicized words on each side. This is basically appa plus the word from forefathers, appa is from.

So he says, I serve God from a pure conscience from forefathers. And it isn't as my forefathers did. Many of Paul's forefathers were the Jews who dropped in the wilderness, who went into captivity, who rejected God, who rejected Christ.

We don't know the status of Paul's forebears in the days when Jesus was on the earth. I heard a speculation today that some think that maybe Paul was at the cross in the days

when he was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel and would have been in Jerusalem and might have witnessed the crucifixion. There's no evidence whatsoever for that other than implication or extrapolation.

But we don't know what the rest of Paul's family thought about Christ at the point that it came up. Did Paul witness to any of his, did he have brothers and sisters? Were any of his parents surviving? We don't know. So this just says, I serve God with a pure conscience from forefathers.

I personally think that this is the knowledge of the law and the enthusiasm for the law of God that he inherited from his family. He's from Tarsus, which is Tarshish, but he was sent evidently back to Israel and back to Jerusalem to be in the school of Gamaliel and become a Pharisee. And evidently this was with his family's support.

And so many people can come from a background of Christian faith. It may be denominational. It may be Catholic.

It could be any, it could be Episcopalian, could be Greek Orthodox, could be almost anything. But in some way, shape or form, there is a zeal for God. It may not be according to knowledge or it may be according to knowledge, but he just says, this has been in my family.

This is in my background. He could be talking about Israel in general, but it would be an odd thing to say to Timothy because Timothy's mother is Jewish. And when he says from the fathers, it'd be a little awkward because Timothy gets his Jewishness through his mother and his father's a Greek.

But you get the idea that this is a reference that Paul's family had this enthusiasm. And this is a wonderful heritage to look back and see that, well, there's been, you know, there's other people in my family. I'm not an outlier.

I'm not a strange malformation in the family tree. There have been a lot of people in previous generations who cared about God and things of God. So the idea that serving God according to conscience is in Paul's family history.

And Paul, by calling Timothy his son, is extending that family heritage. He's transferring physical heritage to spiritual heritage to Timothy and saying this enthusiasm for God that I have by nature. I see in you and I share with you and I hope and encourage in you as though you were the next generation of my own family.

So the bond is that close and that meaningful. And all of us know that in the family of faith, in the body of Christ, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. There are so many close relationships that transcend whatever things might normally separate or divide or cause us to be distinct.

In Christ, there is no Jew nor Greek. In Christ, there is no East or West, as the old song goes. And it's a wonderful transcendent bond, the spirit of unity and the bond of peace.

So I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience from the forefathers. As without ceasing, I remember you in my prayers, night and day. What does it mean to pray without ceasing? This is an interesting word, and I am going to give you the Greek in this because it's too interesting to pass up, and it bears on our understanding of other passages.

Without ceasing is *adia lepton*, a-d-i-a-l-e-p-t-o-n, *adia lepton*, and the alpha privet is the only thing you have to know. You know, when you put an A in front of it, if you're moral and you put an A in front of it, you're amoral, you have no morals. If you're a theist and you don't want to believe in God, you have to be a theist, atheist.

So this is without a gap in the pattern, without a gap in the pattern. And this is something that means continual but not constant. It's regular and frequent but not uninterrupted.

And that's exactly what it means in Greek. You can go through all the lexicons and the rest of it. What you come out with is this is like a dotted line.

It really is, as they used to say, with the frequency of a hacking cough. So when you look at the other passages of Scripture that use this word, you find that the pray without ceasing, rejoice evermore, is exactly that. Pray frequently and regularly.

Frequently and regularly is the idea. You can't do something unceasingly and get anything else done. So I regularly and frequently is a good translation of this.

Regularly and frequently remember you in my prayers night and day. Notice Paul doesn't just pray at meals. This is Psalm 55, 17, evening and morning and at noon.

There is prayer at night, night and day. So the pattern of prayer for Paul is he prays during the day and he prays during the night. And pray without ceasing, the idea here is regularly and frequently.

We should punctuate our day with prayer. This keeps us conscious of our spiritual identity and we're not immersed in the physicality and materiality of the day as it proceeds. I remember you in my prayers.

This is our privilege to remember each other in our prayers, our spiritual family. And to pray effectively and make mention and intercede, we have to be aware of what's going on. This isn't nosiness.

It's not meddling. It's not intrusive. But in order to know what's going on with people, we need some regular contact.

They can update us on what's going on. If they share a prayer request, we've had some requests shared with us today. And it's a privilege to pray for those who are in our fellowship or extended fellowship and bring those things before the throne of grace.

This is primarily an exercise in the application of what we know about the word of God. Someone has a challenge. Someone loses a job.

Someone has a health issue. How can I pray? How can I pray? I can just say, oh, God, please give Joe a job. Oh, God, please heal Aunt Mary.

Or we can pray as we've discussed in the past. Someone who's got a pure conscience, a sincere faith, and a heart that is cleansed of sin is going to be able to cycle in the word of God. Okay, here's somebody.

Let's just take unemployment. I know several people or know of several people who are unemployed. So what can you pray? I can say, please give so-and-so a job.

Or I can say, Lord, please work in the life of this believer who loves you and is ready and willing to absorb from this experience the priorities and the goals and the values that you would have them come to understand if they need greater faith and reliance on your grace and provision. Bring that about. Remind them of your promises.

Give them comfort and encouragement and freedom from worry through the word of God that they have in their soul. Bring to their mind the promises and the principles and the doctrines. May their time of stress and testing be a testimony and a witness of your glory as it shines through that situation to draw others to you through the Lord Jesus.

May it be an opportunity to practice and enhance reliance on the Holy Spirit and reflection on the word. There's all kinds of things that we know God is going to answer. God's not going to say, no, I'm not going to make them aware of the Holy Spirit.

I'm not going to bring to their mind my promises and principles. I'm not going to. Of course, he's going to do those things.

Of course, he's going to use the opportunity to reflect his glory and to help a believer grow in grace and to help those around them see the presence of God and the difference that it makes in somebody who might otherwise be crushed by circumstances. They have joy and peace and love, and they wind up being a blessing where you would think others would need to come in and try to bless them. You see this happen over and over again.

This is how we pray, and we pray regularly, day and night. That's at least two prayers a day, right? If you go to 5517 in Psalms, that's three prayers a day, minimum, to stop and reflect. We can offer requests for ourselves.

We can offer thanksgiving, and we can intercede for each other. I remember you regularly in my prayers, night and day, greatly desiring to see you being mindful of your tears that I may be filled with joy. Read that sentence a couple of times.

I greatly desire to see you. I am mindful of your tears, and I want to see you. It's a little chiasm there.

I desire to see you that I may be filled with joy, being mindful of your tears. Why doesn't he say, I want to come see you so that you can be filled with joy instead of tears? He says, I know you're sad to the point of tears, and I greatly desire to see you. I'm mindful of your tears.

But I want to come and see you and be filled with joy. How does that work? What's the logic there? We would say, I know you're crying. I want to come and cheer you up.

I want to come and fill you with joy. It isn't what Paul says. Remember the opening of this letter, the reason we belabored a little bit about the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus, and going to 1 Timothy, Christ Jesus, our hope.

What is Paul doing here? I greatly desire to come see you. I am mindful of your tears. I am offering you the hope of my visit.

And when I come and visit, I want to be filled with joy. How can Paul be filled with joy when he comes to see Timothy? What would fill Paul with joy in a personal visit to Timothy? That Timothy has overcome his tears and is taking on board the things that Paul has taught him and exhorted and encouraged, right? When Paul comes and sees that Timothy is improvised, adapted, and overcome, has used his spiritual resources, and has worked through his tears, Paul doesn't say, I'm going to come take your tears away. He says, I want to come and see that you have prevailed.

You have used your spiritual resources, the power of God in the spirit and in the word. And when I come and see you, I'm going to be joyful in your victory over circumstances, your victory over hardship, your prevailing in the face of these difficulties. This is the way the Lord Jesus feels about us.

The Lord Jesus wants to come and collect us to Himself. He is mindful of our tears, but He wants to come and have it be an occasion of His joy in us. He wants to find us so doing, ready, able, presentable to His Father in heaven.

If you deny me before men, I'll deny you before the Father. If you confess me before men, I want to present you to my Father, which is an occasion of joy. So this is a little miniature.

Paul and Timothy is a miniature of the Lord Jesus and us. He's mindful of our tears. He knows it's hard.

The Lord Jesus has been here. He's experienced life in the flesh. The Lord Jesus Himself shed tears.

Jesus wept. He wept over the lack of understanding at Lazarus' resurrection. He wept over Jerusalem, whom He longed to gather under His wings as a hen gathers her chicks, and the people would have none of Him.

And He wept. But He wants to return and be present and have it be an occasion for His joy. He's not coming back for our joy.

We want to be ready and fulfill His joy. Remember in another place, Paul says, fulfill my joy by being like-minded in Philippians 2, 2 through 4. Fulfill my joy that you may be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the interests of others. Look out not only for your own interests, but also the interests of others. Then you go into the rest of Philippians chapter 2. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who did not think equality with God a thing to be grasped, and so on.

But fulfill my joy, Paul says. He doesn't say if you'll do these things, you'll get joy. It will make me joyful if you will be like-minded, have the same love, be of one accord, one mind.

Don't do things out of strife and desire to glorify yourself. In humility, lowliness of mind, esteem others better than yourself. Look out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others.

That fulfills Paul's joy. And by extension, that fulfills the Lord Jesus' joy. To live a life in what my old pastor used to call frantic search for happiness, the more you chase it, the more distant it becomes.

It is when we work for the joy of the Lord Jesus, the joy that Paul reflects when he's talking to Timothy. Fulfill my joy. Work through your tears so that when I see you, I may have joy in the reunion.

It's a different perspective, isn't it? Something to think about. If I'm trying to make myself happy, it's going to be an exercise in futility. But if I concentrate not only on my own interests, but the interests of others, if I strive for unity, the same love, one accord, and think constantly, I want to do what pleases the Lord Jesus, what is going to fulfill his joy when he comes.

That's what's going on here. Greatly desiring to see you, mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy when I see you again. Paul and Timothy, the Lord Jesus, and us, it's

exactly the same.

It's a wonderful example of this kind of greater truth contained in specific examples that we have seen throughout these pastoral epistles, isn't it? It's amazing. You can sit and look at this greeting over and over again, the mix of responsibility and opportunity, the mix of human experience and human relationship and our divinely inspired relationships, our spiritual connections, and the opportunities and challenges that exist there. We've got one foot in this world and one foot in the next.

And managing that dual identity in a way that brings joy to the heart of the Lord Jesus is our great opportunity, our great privilege, and our great challenge. Well, we're just getting started in this great letter. We'll resume here at the end of verse three and beginning of verse four and five this coming Sunday, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for how it nourishes our souls. It clears our thinking.

It purifies our hearts and our conscience. It strengthens our faith and enables us to be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We pray that as we reflect on it, the Holy Spirit will give us understanding and insight, help us to see the opportunities and the applications in our immediate circumstances so that we can put it into practice.

We can grow in grace. We can grow in knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We pray it in his name.

Amen.