

## **Our Indestructible Investment!**

Call to Worship: Psalm 18:1-3

1st Scripture: Psalm 73

2nd Scripture: 2 Timothy 1

Hymn #157- *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

Hymn #152- *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Hymn #712- *I Know Whom I Have Believed*

### **Introduction:**

In some ways, you might think of 2 Timothy as one of the most difficult letters/books to read in all the New Testament. Now, what I mean by this is not to say that the content is difficult to understand. To that end, it is actually pretty clear and straight forward. There is not a lot of difficult theology to wrestle with.

What I do mean is that it is laced with sorrow upon sorrow, which has come upon the Apostle Paul, so near to the end of his life. Paul is preparing to die. He will soon be beheaded by Nero, arguably one of the most wicked Roman emperors in all of the history of Rome. And while that end for Paul is bitter sweet (although he will be martyred, his race is finally finished and he is heading to glory to receive his crown), the context within which his end takes place is full of sadness and grief. Upon reading through the letter, you get a deep sense of the Apostle's plea for Timothy to persevere and stay the course, as others have dropped out, gone astray, or abandoned the Apostle in some significant sense. And so, you can smell the tears on each page of the letter, as it were. We'll take a general look at that context in a few moments.

But, what makes this book so fitting for a "beginning of the year" consideration, is that, within this difficult context, of a dying Paul, who has experienced great sorrow throughout the course of his fight (and that, right to the end), you get a profound and unique view of the Apostle's heart; his drive and that which compels him onward, at any cost. In other words, there is a very clear ledge, which holds Paul up; a "what it all comes down to, no matter what" ledge, which is exposed to us, and which I believe, must be that same ledge, upon which, we rest everything, if we are to remain steadfast to the end, in spite of the torrential downpour of debris that rains down upon us from the crumbling precipice of this world. This is where the rubber meets the road for all of us, brethren; it is the fine line that pierces bone and marrow, soul and spirit, when seeking to authenticate a living faith, in the face of so many mere professions.

## **I. The Context of Great Grief and Sorrow**

In the first seven verses, Paul expresses his deep desire to see Timothy again, and he seeks to encourage Timothy concerning the sincere and authentic faith that is in him, something that he wishes he could say about many others who have crossed his path. You come to appreciate these words, and the fervency of them, by the time you get to the end of this letter. But, when you get to verses 6&7, you arrive at a particular focal point, toward which, Paul is driving with this encouragement. "Therefore (being certain of your sincere faith, Timothy) I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Throughout the course of Paul's interactions with Timothy, you see this concern highlighted. Because of Timothy's young age, and perhaps his natural disposition toward timidity, Paul urged Timothy to be bold, and to exercise the full expression of the gift that was within him; to take steps of faith and risks in Christ, recognizing that God would meet that faith with His strength and blessing. Timothy was fitted to be a leader, but in order to lead, one must overcome various fears, and especially, a fear of man. And so, Paul wished to urge Timothy further in this direction, unto the full use and expression of his giftedness, for the glory of Christ's kingdom. You see, being gifted is one thing, but without the boldness needed to exercise that giftedness, the gift will simply be smothered and put out by fear. And so, Paul exhorts Timothy to this end.

Now, before we continue on into verses 8-12 (the main thrust of the message for this morning), just hear a summary expression of some of the hardships and disappointments that Paul faced, which will help set the context for the entire letter.

1) Verses 13-15, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." And in chapter 2:1, he adds, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Pretty strong and sobering words! All in Asia have turned away from Paul! Isn't that where Ephesus, Laodicea, Philadelphia, Colossae...etc are? Now, the word "all" here may not be literal, but it is significant, isn't it? And how much time did Paul invest in Asia?

2) Chapter 2:8-10 & 14-19.

3) Chapter 3:10-15.

4) Chapter 4:1-5 & **10** & 14-16. [See also Colossians 4:14 & Philip. 3:17-21]

Do you sense the urgency and sorrow surrounding these texts, brethren? At the end of 2 Timothy, we can appreciate what Paul means when he states that he has, "fought the good fight," "finished the race," and "kept the faith," all the more in such a context as this! And hopefully, we can sense the urgency of his plea, as he exhorts Timothy to take up arms and to do the same! And hopefully, we can sense the urgency of his plea, as that which is very relevant for us, as well, as we have still yet to reach the final goal of glory!

Having a bit of this context of urgency and sorrow in mind, let us then return to consider verses 8-12 in this light.

## **II. Paul's Indestructible Investment**

You'll notice that in verses 7-8 of chapter one, Paul exhorts Timothy toward the distinct calling of the Christian, which so many have drifted away from. [Read verses 7-8]

"Timothy, I know your sincere faith, and you must remain bold in Christ. Don't compromise. Cling to the true testimony of the gospel, at all costs, and never be ashamed of it or the Christ of it, no matter how many fall at your side! And don't be ashamed of me, the prisoner of the Lord. Yes, many have walked away from me already. Many have been unwilling to share in my sufferings. They all cling to this world. But you, share with me in the sufferings for the gospel, in accordance with the power of God, that is within you. Let God be true and every man a liar."

God, (verses 9-11) "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling (who has rescued us from the power and curse of our sins and has called us to be set apart from the world, unto *His* service), not according to our works (not according to any merits or good deeds on our part), but

according to His own purpose (His own will and design), and grace (His free, unmerited favor) which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, (before we were born, before we had a spark of residue of any form of existence, before time and anyone or anything was created, this free grace was already given us; it was preordained and secured in the form of a deposit, in Christ Jesus, in accordance with the glorious purposes of the Triune counsel, where Christ, the Living and Eternal Word, was set apart to be the Redeemer of a fallen people), but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ (what was preordained and given us before time in Christ; what was once a mystery to us in our fallen and lost state, has now been revealed in the appearing of the Son of God, who took on flesh and fulfilled and exposed the pre-time, Triune will to us), who has abolished (eliminated, destroyed, removed, made null and void) death (which once plagued us with great fear and terror) and brought life (eternal, abundant life) and immortality (an indestructible, eternal humanity) to light through the gospel (He opened the door of our dark corruption and brought us out and into the light of His glorious gospel, so that we would receive what was freely and graciously determined to be ours before time began, no thanks to us whatsoever), to which I (Paul) was appointed a preacher (a proclaimer of this glorious, once hidden, but now revealed reality), and a teacher of the Gentiles (whom God had determined before time, to ultimately bring into His glorious kingdom at just the right time, upon the arrival of the New Covenant in Christ).

You see, brethren, as Timothy read these truths, certainly, these glorious reminders were meant to spark a large blaze of fiery boldness and zeal within his soul, so that he would blast forth with a stronger commitment to remain fixed to the foundation, off of which, so many had already fallen. The privilege herein described by Paul; the incomprehensible love and sovereign will of God, herein exposed, is beyond powerful enough to overshadow every present trial and temptation, which breathed fiery threats against Timothy's soul. Do you see that?

And finally, Paul adds, in verses 12-13, "For this reason I also suffer these things (because of my commitment to faithfully preach to and teach the Gentiles, in accordance with the ministerial stewardship granted me by God, I suffer these things, including my present imprisonment and pending death)..." "...nevertheless I am not ashamed (though I am among a persecuted minority; though my commitment to the gospel has brought me these scars and these

chains; though I am mocked and ridiculed and oppressed, I am not ashamed Timothy, and I charge you to bring these things to mind, so that you will continue to suffer hardship with me, without being ashamed...and here's why..."... "Something far bigger and long term consumes me, and enables me to endure any hardship in this temporal present state..."

"For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day!"

This is where the rubber meets the road for Paul, brethren. Though everything around him might collapse, he knew that his confidence was fully placed on a Solid Rock! "I know *whom* I have believed! I know His power and His ability and I know His integrity and His inability to lie. I know the certainty of His Word. I am so confident that He will accomplish all of His good and glorious purposes in me; yes, and that He will fulfill all He has promised, that though my body might be torn to shreds, and though I am mocked by the world, and though a thousand fall down at my side, I am certain; I am persuaded in the inner most depths of my soul that He will keep and protect all that I have committed to Him, right to the end! Right up to the day of His glorious return. There is no fear of Him failing or forgetting or pulling back at some point (any point) in the future. I know whom I have believed. He is unlike any other man, who has ever walked the face of the earth! He is the God Man, who has already proven Himself, beyond comprehension, by laying aside His glory, taking on flesh, bearing my shame and conquering my sin. And He was raised up unto my justification! Nothing and no one can separate me from the love of God, therefore, which is given me in Christ! No one can snatch me out of His hand! My faith investment in Him, which has been preordained before time, in the grace given me in Christ; that investment is indestructible and irrevocable, and when I come to my end here, I will not be ashamed beyond the grave! He will keep all that I have committed to Him! My hands cannot hold it. I am too weak. But He has it, seated there at the right hand of the Father! It is well protected and secure! And so, I am not ashamed in my sufferings, because He is not ashamed of me! This is where my heart is fixed, and this is why I endure all things for the sake of the gospel and the elect! I know and am certain about the end of this story, Timothy! [See this confidence exhibited again in chapter 4:14-18]

And so, Paul can leave Timothy this charge [read verses 13-15 & 2:1-13]

### **III. Closing Charge for the New Year**

In light of all that we have considered here, brethren, let me leave you this closing New Year charge. We have no idea what a day will bring, let alone a new year. What will 2016 look like? Will we enjoy the same freedoms? Will this be the year that we look back and realize how we have taken for granted so much of what we have had? Will we undergo fierce persecution or great trials in the church? Will we find some apostatizing from the faith, right here, from our own midst? Nothing is secure or certain in this world.

But brethren, here is the singular main point of this message, taken from the heart of a dying, grieved, sorrowful, Apostle Paul. If you have nothing else; if everything else in this world collapses beneath your feet, you yet have everything, if you have committed your soul to Christ! He will not fail! Look around. Everyone here; we will all let you down at times. Your spouse will fall short. Your parents, children, relatives and closest friends will all fall short. Some, dare I say, may even turn against you. But, your faith and hope are not ultimately in them or in anyone else. Your faith and hope are in a Christ who cannot fail! And it is that relationship; it is that union with Christ, which will carry you to the end of a heap of sorrows, pains and discouragements in this world. You have an indestructible investment in a Savior who will not and cannot let you down! And He has already proven this in all that He has done at the cross. It doesn't get anymore secure than that!

And so, my counsel and encouragement and exhortation to you, as you enter a new year is this: Walk faithfully with Christ, no matter what! And remind yourself at all times; stop in the whirlwind of life, and tell yourself, "I know whom I have believed (I know the character and heart and power of Christ), and I am persuaded (wholly convinced) that He is able (more than capable) to keep what I have committed unto Him until that day! Nothing in me or in anyone else; no weakness of the flesh or of the mind; no power in heaven or on earth; nothing of my own frailty can ever prevent Christ from accomplishing all that He has promised concerning me! It's not in my hands! He holds the entire investment, and He will see it through to its complete fulfillment! And you can take that to the bank!

To the unbeliever: You have nothing if you don't have Christ! The bridge of life is collapsing beneath you at this very moment, and your eternal destiny hangs in the balance!

[Address young people and their need for a whole hearted confidence in no one else but Christ!]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Habakkuk 3:17-19