

ii Timothy - Part 2 - Proclaim the Gospel

by John Stott

The sermon emphasizes the importance of preaching the gospel with urgency, relevance, patience, and intelligence, and encourages believers to be faithful in proclaiming the gospel despite difficult circumstances.

Duration: 48:20

Scripture: Proverbs 15:1, Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Timothy 4:2-4, 2 Timothy 4:7

Topics: "Proclaim"

Description

In this sermon, Reverend John R. focuses on the importance of preaching the word of God. He emphasizes that our proclamation should be urgent, never losing our sense of urgency in sharing the message. The word of God, which consists of the Old Testament scriptures and the gospel, is a treasure that we are charged to proclaim. Reverend John R. concludes by reminding us of Paul's last words, expressing the desire for the Lord to be with us and for grace to be with us.

Transcript

This is the last in a series of four Bible studies in 2nd Timothy, given by the Reverend John R. W. Stott at the 8th InterVarsity Missionary Convention, held in the Assembly Hall at the University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, December 1967. We open our Bibles again at the second epistle of Paul to Timothy, and we come to the fourth and the last chapter, 2nd Timothy, chapter 4. We entitle chapter 1, the charge to guard the gospel, chapter 2, the charge to suffer for the gospel, chapter 3, the charge to continue in the gospel, and chapter 4 is the charge to preach the gospel. Now, these words that are before us this morning are some of the very last words written by the Apostle Paul.

Certainly, they are the last words of his which have survived. He is writing, I remind you, within weeks, possibly even within days, of his martyrdom, which, according to ancient tradition, was by being beheaded on the Ostian Way outside Rome. For 30 years, without any intermission, the Apostle Paul has been laboring as an itinerant ambassador of Jesus Christ.

Truly, as he says in this chapter, he has fought a good fight, he has finished his course, and he has kept the faith. And now he awaits his coronation, the award of the crown of righteousness, which he says is laid up for him. And therefore, these words that we are studying this morning are Paul's legacy to the Church.

They breathe an atmosphere of great solemnity, and I think it is impossible to read them without being profoundly stirred. They take the form of a solemn charge. Verse 1, I charge you in the presence of God

and of Christ Jesus.

This charge was addressed in the first instance to Timothy, Paul's apostolic delegate. But these words are applicable certainly to every man who is called to the ministry of the Church or to the mission field, and indeed in a secondary sense to every Christian witness, which means every Christian person. There are three aspects of the charge that I bring you this morning.

We must first consider the nature of this apostolic charge, what it was. Secondly, we shall go on to see the basis of the charge, the arguments upon which it was grounded. And thirdly, we shall see a personal illustration of it from the example of Paul himself in Rome.

Firstly, then, the nature of the charge. This is given in three words at the beginning of verse 2, preach the word. And it will be very hard to find a better motto for us as we prepare to leave the convention tonight or early tomorrow morning.

The whole Church of Jesus Christ and every member of it has been entrusted with a message and been charged to proclaim it. Notice that our message is a word. It is in fact the word, God's word, which God has spoken.

It's equivalent to what in verse 3 is called the sound teaching, in verse 4 the truth, and in verse 7 the faith. And this word consists of the Old Testament scriptures, God breathed and profitable, which we considered yesterday morning and which Timothy had known from childhood. The word consists also of the teaching of the apostles, what Timothy had heard and received and learned from the apostle Paul, which had been entrusted to him by Paul to God and to teach to others.

So then, the word that we are to preach is not our own invention. The word that we are, the message that we are given to proclaim is the word which God has spoken and which is now committed to the Church as a sacred trust. Our message is a word and our duty is to preach it, to speak to others what God has spoken to us and given us in the scripture.

Our duty then is not just to hear the word, not just to believe it and to obey it, nor just to guard it from every falsification, nor even to suffer for it and to continue in it. Our duty is to preach it, to proclaim it, because it is God's good news of salvation for sinners. We are to proclaim it like heralds in the marketplace, to lift up our voice without fear or favour and boldly to make it known.

Will you do that on your campus this coming term? Preach the word. That is the commission, the charge that is given to us all. Now Paul goes into details and he tells us how to preach the word and our proclamation has four characteristics.

A. It is to be urgent. Preach the word, be urgent, in season, out of season. J. B. Phillips, never lose your sense of urgency and it's no good proclaiming the word or witnessing to a friend in a listless and lackadaisical way.

As Richard Baxter writes in his classic book, *The Reformed Pastor*, whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest. You cannot break men's hearts by jesting with them or telling them a smooth tale or patching up a gaudy oration. Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures upon a drowsy request of one that seemeth not to mean as he speaks or to care much whether his request is granted.

Let us therefore rouse up ourselves to the work of the Lord and speak to our people as for their lives and save them by violence, pulling them out of the fire. All true Christian preaching has a note of urgency. The Christian herald knows that he is handling matters of life and death, the sinner's plight under the judgment of God, the love of God who gave his son to die for sinners and the urgent summons to repent and to believe.

Our preaching is to be urgent and it's in season and out of season. New English Bible, press it home on all occasions, convenient or inconvenient. Now what does that mean? I want to suggest to you that this is not to be taken as an excuse for that insensitive brashness which has often characterized our evangelism and brought it into disrepute.

We are not to barge unceremoniously into other people's privacy and tread on everybody's corns. We have no liberty to do such a thing. No, the occasions convenient or inconvenient are convenient or inconvenient for the speaker, not for the hearer.

And so the New English Bible margin has it, be on duty at all times, convenient or inconvenient. In other words, what we are given here is not a biblical warrant for rudeness but a biblical appeal against laziness. Be on duty at all times, whether they're convenient for you or inconvenient, and let us be urgent in our proclamation.

Charles Simeon, whom I mentioned the other day in the forum, used to preach with great earnestness of voice and gesture, although he was an Episcopal clergyman. And on one occasion a little girl, brought into church and hearing him for the first time, turned to her mother and said, Oh mama, what is the gentleman in a passion about? He was urgent in his preaching. Let us be too.

Be, our preaching is to be relevant. We go on in verse two, preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort. And these are three possible ways of preaching the word, three possible ways of applying the word.

The God's word is profitable for different ministries. It speaks to men in different conditions and it can be implied in different ways. And the preacher, the witness, must remember this and he must be skillful in applying the word to the particular needs of the person to whom he's speaking.

New English Bible use argument, reproof, appeal. That is to say, some people are full of doubt and they need to be convinced by argument. Other people are full of sin and need to be rebuked or approved.

Other people are full of fear and need to be exhorted and encouraged. And God's word does all this and more and we must preach it relevantly. And don't let's be like that Italian mayor of a certain Italian city of whom I read just a year or two ago, who gave a learned discourse on economics to a delegation of economists, as he thought, only to find when he finished that they were a football team.

He had two speeches in his pocket and he pulled out the wrong one. Our speaking is to be urgent and it is to be relevant and see is to be patient. Be unflinching in patience, verse two, authorized version with all long-suffering.

That is, although we are to be urgent, longing for people's ready response to the message, we are to be patient in waiting for it. We are never to use human psychological pressures or attempt to force or contrive a decision. Our responsibility is to be faithful in the proclamation of the word and the results are the responsibility of the Holy Spirit.

And we can afford to be patient in waiting for them. And we are to be patient in manner as well, for as we saw a couple of mornings ago, the servant of the Lord is to be gentle with all men. So however solemn our commission and however urgent our message, there is no excuse for a brusque or an impatient manner.

D, our proclamation is to be intelligent. End of verse two, we are to be unfailing in patience and in teaching, authorized version with all doctrine. That is, we're not only to preach the word, we are to teach it, or rather we are to preach it with all teaching.

Many of you, I think, will be familiar with the modern distinction of which theologians are fond between the kirugma and the didache. The kirugma, which is the proclamation to unbelievers of the gospel, and the didache, which is instruction given to converts. Now for such who like that distinction, and it's legitimate up to a point, this verse is of importance.

It shows that we must not differentiate too rigidly between these two things, for the kirugma is to be proclaimed with all didache, with all teaching. Our proclamation, whether we are seeking to convince or to rebuke or to exhort, must be a doctrinal proclamation. I tell you the Christian ministry is essentially a teaching ministry.

The candidate for the ministry of the church is, according to Titus 1 verse 9, to hold firm the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and to contradict those who confute it. And according to 1 Timothy 3, the candidate for the ministry must be didactikos, apt to teach. I want to say to you that there is a great need in every country in the world as the process of urbanization continues and as the standards of education rise for a teaching ministry.

And you and I ought to have a far greater burden for the intelligentsia of the country. My own personal longing is that we shall see in our own generation, in every capital city of the world and in every university city of the world, an evangelical church in which the gospel is faithfully and intelligently and thoughtfully expounded, in which the whole counsel of God is taught. Paul said he was in debt and under obligation not only to barbarians but to the Greeks, not only to the unwise and the foolish but to the wise.

Such then is our charge, to preach the word and in our proclamation of this God-given message to be urgent, relevant, patient and intelligent. In our whole ministry, urgent. In our application of the word, relevant.

In our bearing and manner, patient. And in our presentation, intelligent. Would that we could take deeply into our hearts and minds this apostolic charge to the church and seek to obey it in our own lives.

That's the first thing, the nature of the church. Two, the basis of the church. Now we've already seen that Timothy was young in years, weak in physique, timid in temperament, and that the times in which he lived were difficult and dangerous.

And I think as Timothy listened to this apostolic charge to preach the word in this way with urgency and so on, he must have quailed. His knees would tremble. He'd be tempted to shrink from the task.

And we too are called, as we've seen, to this responsibility that is far beyond our natural capacity. And so Paul does more than issue a charge. He adds incentives.

He adds a motivation. That is our thought today. He bids Timothy look in three directions.

A, at Jesus Christ, the coming judge and king. B, at the contemporary scene. And C, at Paul, the aged prisoner approaching martyrdom.

Let's look at these three. A, he bids him look at the coming Christ. Verse one, I charge you in the presence of God.

He's not issuing his charge in his own name or in his own authority, but in the conscious presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead. And I charge you on the ground of his appearing and his kingdom. So the charge is issued not only in the presence of God, but in view of the coming of Christ.

Now notice that Paul still believes in the epiphany of Jesus Christ, that he is one day going to make a personal and a visible appearing. Paul had written of it in his early epistles. And although now he knows he's personally going to die before it takes place, he still lives in the light of it.

And he describes Christians in verse eight as those who love his epiphany, his appearing. Paul knows that Jesus Christ is going to appear personally and visibly, and that when he appears, he's going to judge the world and consummate his kingdom. And these things, the appearing, the judgment, and the kingdom, or their future, were clear and certain realities in the life of the Apostle Paul.

And you and I need to live our Christian life and do our Christian work in the light of these same realities. And in particular, we are never to forget that both we who preach and those who listen are going to have to give an account to Christ when he appears. So that is the first motivation, the coming Christ.

B, the contemporary scene, verses three to five. Verse three, four, that is because, here is a reason for my charge, the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, etc. Now as at the beginning of chapter four, chapter three, so here the times described are already present.

And Timothy is to frame his ministry in the light of the times in which he lived. It's not just that bad times were going to come, and Timothy must therefore preach the word before they arrive, but that he must go on preaching the word even when the bad times have arrived. Now what are these bad times like? Well, Paul's singles are just one characteristic.

He states it negatively and positively, and he says it twice. In brief, it is that men cannot bear the truth. Verse five, verse three, they cannot endure sound teaching, but they accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings.

Verse four, they turn away from listening to the truth and they wander into myths. So they can't bear the truth and they won't listen to it, but they wander into myths and they accumulate teachers to suit their own likings. And you note it's all to do with their ears.

Their ears are mentioned twice, and they have a strange pathological condition called itching ears. And these ears are itching for novelty, and the itching ear is full of curiosity, and it is looking for some spicy new teaching. And so because their ears are itching for novelty, they stop their ears against the old-fashioned gospel, and they open them to any teacher who will relieve their itch by scratching it.

And I want to ask you to notice that what they're rejecting is the sound teaching and the truth. And what they prefer to the sound teaching and the truth is their own likings. In other words, they substitute their own preference for God's revelation.

And the criterion by which they judge teachers is not God's word as it ought to be, but their own subjective taste. Now that's the situation in which we live today. People are ridiculing the gospel and the evangelical faith and the message that is so infinitely precious to us, and instead they have itching ears for all these theological novelties that are going about in the world and in the church today.

Well, what then must our reaction be to this situation? What was Timothy's reaction to be? Now let's listen carefully and think about this. In a desperate situation in which men and women are not going to listen to the truth and have itching ears for novelty, you might think that such a situation would silence Timothy. Surely he might say people can't bear the truth, and if they won't listen to the truth, why surely the prudent thing would be to shut up shop and to hold our peace.

And Paul reaches the opposite conclusion. Verse 5, As for you, and for the third time he tells Timothy to be different. As for you, it is precisely the same expression in the Greek as we saw yesterday in chapter 3, verses 10 and 14.

Timothy is not to take his lead from the prevailing theological fashions. He is to be different. Verse 5, As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

In other words, the people around you are unstable. So Timothy, you are to be stable, to be steady, understand your ground. Again, the people around you will not endure sound doctrine.

So Timothy, you must be willing to endure suffering by continuing to preach sound doctrine. The people around you are ignorant of the evangel. So Timothy, you must do the work of an evangelist.

Again, the people around you are accumulating teachers to suit their own likings. So Timothy, you must be all the more conscientious in fulfilling your own ministry that God has given you. In other words, these difficult times, and we live in them today, in which it is hard to gain a hearing for the gospel, they are not to discourage us.

They are not to deter us from our ministry. Still less are they to induce us to trim our message to suit the fashions of the day. Still less are they to make us shut up and be silent.

They are rather to spur us on to preach the more. Oh my friends, the harder the times, the deafer the people, the louder and the clearer must our proclamation be. That's the second motivation.

A. To look at the coming Christ. B. To look at the contemporary scene. And C. To look at the aged apostle.

Paul the aged, as he called himself a few years previously writing to Philemon. Verse 6. For, because, here is another reason for your, another motivation for your ministry, for I am already on the point of being sacrificed. And there is a clear contrast between verses 5 and 6. Verse 5. You, Timothy, are to fulfill your ministry because I, Timothy, am on the point of closing mine.

My, you see verse 6, I'm on the point of being sacrificed. Already in your English Bible, my life is being poured out on the altar. Paul uses sacrificial language.

He likens his life to a libation or a drink offering. And so imminent does he believe his martyrdom to be that he speaks of the sacrifice as having already begun. Already I am on the point of being sacrificed.

And the time of my departure has come. And that Greek word is a nautical word. It's used of loosing a boat's moorings.

It's already as if the anchor is weighed and the ropes are slipped. And the boat is about to set sail for another and a heavenly shore. Now then, Timothy, I'm on the very point of being sacrificed.

The fragile boat of my life is about to set sail for heaven. Now then, it is up to you to fulfill your ministry. For verse 7, I have fought the good fight as a soldier.

I have finished the race as an athlete. I have kept the faith as a treasure. I've guarded it.

I've been a good steward of it. And as a soldier, an athlete, a steward, I have been faithful to the calling that I've received from God. And now, Timothy, it's up to you.

Verse 8, there's nothing left for me. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness that the Lord will give me when He appears. And even if Nero condemns me when I'm tried, and even if his verdict is one of guilty, and if he condemns me to death, then but a moment later Jesus Christ will reverse the verdict and give me a crown of vindication and of righteousness.

But Timothy, my life is done. I've fought the good fight. I've finished the race.

I've kept the faith. There's nothing left for me but the heavenly reward. And now, Timothy, it's up to you.

And that was Timothy's third spurt of faithfulness. And how you young people, like young Timothy, need to get this message. Our God is the God of history.

God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year. He buries His workmen, but He carries on His work. The torch of the gospel is handed down from one generation to the next.

And as the leaders of the former generation die, it is all the more urgent for the next generation to rise up, to step forward bravely, and to take their place. And I think Timothy's heart will have been deeply moved by this exhortation from Paul the Aegid, who'd led him to Christ. Who led you to Christ? Is he beginning to grow old? The man who led me to Christ is now well into his seventies and is in semi-retirement.

We cannot forever rest upon the leadership of a preceding generation. And the day comes when we must step into their shoes and ourselves assume the leadership. That day had come for Timothy.

And very soon, if not now, it comes to you. And so then, in view of the coming of Christ to judgment, in view of the contemporary world's distaste for the gospel, and in view of the imminent death of the aged apostle, for those three reasons, Paul's charge to Timothy had a note of solemn urgency. Timothy, it's up to you.

Preach the word. So we've seen first the nature of the charge, and second the basis of the charge, and thirdly, in the rest of the chapter, we see an illustration of it from the example of the apostle Paul himself. Verses 9 to 22.

For the apostle Paul himself preached the word. He practiced what he preached. He did exactly what he told Timothy to do.

And he did it when he was on trial for his life before imperial Rome. But before we come to consider this, I want us to look at the circumstances in which it took place. I want you to notice that from a majestic survey of the past, I fought a good fight, finished the course, kept the faith.

And from a confident anticipation of the future, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. Paul returns in thought to his present predicament in a dungeon in Rome. And we need to learn this.

The apostle Paul, great and godly man as he was, was a man of flesh and blood. He was a man of like passions with us, and although he has finished his course, and although he is awaiting his crown, he is still a frail human being with ordinary human needs. Let us look at his plight as he describes it in prison, and in particular, his loneliness.

He was deserted by his friends. I can't go into the details. You must look up the verses yourself.

It's quite true that he had friends overseas to whom he sends greetings, especially Prisca and Aquila, now in Ephesus, and the household of Anesiphorus, already mentioned. It's true that he also sends Timothy bits of information about other friends, Erastus and Petrophimus. It's true again that there were brethren in Rome, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia are named, who must have visited him sometimes.

But nevertheless, Paul has felt himself cut off and abandoned. He is separated from the churches he has founded, and from the people in them whom he knew and loved, and a number of his own circle of traveling companions for different reasons have left him alone. Verse 10, Demas has deserted me.

Instead of setting his love upon the appearing of Christ, he has set his love on this present world. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, Tychicus to Ephesus, and verse 11, only Luke, the beloved physician, is with me. And so for various reasons, good and bad, Paul is alone.

Alone except for Luke, his doctor and his companion for many years. How does he react in this situation of loneliness? Well, he wants companions to cheer him. He begs Timothy, verse 9, do your best to come soon, while I'm still alive.

And in any case, verse 21, do your best to come before winter, when navigation will make it impossible for you to cross the sea. Had you ever thought of Paul like this? Paul who has set his love and his hope on the coming of Jesus Christ, yet longs for the coming of Timothy. Human friendship is the provision of God for men, wonderful as is the presence of Jesus with us today, wonderful as is the prospect of his coming.

They are no substitute for human friends. And Paul wanted Timothy. And then Paul wanted a cloak to keep his body warm, verse 13.

A cloak that was like a blanket, an outer garment with a hole in the middle for the head. He was cold in his dungeon. And then he wanted books and parchments for his mind to be occupied, whether these were the scriptures or some other books on papyrus and parchment.

Now, have you got this lesson? Although, as he says later, the Lord stood by him and strengthened him, and although the Lord can stand by and strengthen us, we are not to despise the use, the use of means. When our spirit is lonely, we need friends. When our body is cold, we need clothing.

When our mind is bored, we need books. These things are not unspiritual, they are human. It is the natural need of an ordinary, frail, and mortal man.

Don't despise these things. Don't become so super-spiritual that you say you're above the need of human friendships. If you're as super-spiritual as that, you're super-scriptural.

And there's a good example of it in William Tyndale, to whom we really owe our Bible. Listen to this, in 1535, imprisoned by the persecutor at Villevoorde in Belgium, not long before his fiery martyrdom, he wrote a letter in Latin to the Marquess of Bergen, the governor of the castle, and he said this, I entreat your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I must remain here in prison for the winter, you would beg the commissary to be so kind as to send me from the things of mine which he has a warmer cap. I feel the cold painfully in my head.

Also a warmer cloak, for the cloak I have is very thin. He has a woollen shirt of mine, if he will send it, but most of all my Hebrew Bible, grammar, and vocabulary, that I may spend my time in that pursuit. Here is Paul, this frail human being, cold in his body, longing for his books, longing for his friends.

Not only so, but he was opposed by Alexander the coppersmith, verses 14 and 15. I can't go into that now. And then verses 16 to 18, at his first trial, he was unsupported by anybody.

Plummer puts it like this, among all the Christians in Rome, there was not one who would stand at his side in court, either to speak on his behalf, or to advise him in the conduct of his case, or to support him by demonstration of sympathy. And I dare to say that this moment was Paul's Gethsemane. For like his master, he was alone in his great ordeal, and in his greatest need, all his friends forsook him and fled.

They deserted him. Nevertheless, he was not alone. For although all men deserted me, verse 16, yet the Lord stood by me.

The Lord Jesus stood at my side, and he gave me inward strength. Inward strength to do what? To preach the gospel. And is this not a superb illustration? Paul was on trial for his life.

All his earthly friends had left him in the lurch, or were unable to help him. Surely now, for once, the apostle will think of himself for a change. Surely now, we shall see some trace of self-pity.

Surely now, we shall watch him rallying to his own defence and pleading his own cause. Surely now, in grave personal danger, his over-mastering concern will be himself. But no, it is Christ.

And his dominant concern and passion is not to be a witness in his own defence, but to be a witness to Jesus Christ. Not to plead his own cause, but the cause of Jesus Christ. And in one of the highest tribunals of the empire, before his judges, and it may be before the emperor himself, and no doubt with a large cosmopolitan crowd present, because the general public were admitted to those trials, either in a large basilica or in the forum in the open air itself, Paul preached the word.

And if ever there has been a Christian sermon preached out of season, this was it. We don't know what he said, but he says he fully preached the kerygma. He took the opportunity to expound the gospel in its fullness.

And only because of that could he say, I have finished my course. And that was Timothy's model, in issuing a solemn charge to Timothy to preach the word, and to do it urgently, in season, out of season. Paul had not evaded the challenge himself.

So now, will you give me just a moment or two in which to look back over the whole epistle, and to conclude. Underlying the whole epistle is Paul's conviction, which I hope is yours and mine, that God has spoken. Through the prophets of the old testament, and through the apostles of the new testament, God had revealed himself, and that he has committed to the church a deposit, a treasure, which is called the

word, the truth, the faith, the sound teaching, the pattern of sound words, the gospel.

God has spoken, and he has deposited this message with the church. But now the apostle, who for 30 years has faithfully delivered to others, what he has himself received, is on his deathbed. His active ministry is over.

He's on the point of being sacrificed. He seems to have caught a glimpse already of the gleaming steel of the executioner's sword. So he burns with a passionate longing that Timothy, his young but trusted lieutenant, will step into his shoes and carry on where he's left off, and preach the word.

Oh, he knows that Timothy will have problems to face, that Timothy is young and frail and shy, and the days are evil and difficult, and the devil hates the gospel, and the devil seeks to stop the gospel being preached, now by perverting it, falsifying it in the mouths of those who preach it, now by frightening them into silence through persecution or ridicule, now by persuading them to advance beyond the gospel instead of abiding in it, now by making them so busy with other things, even with defending the gospel, that they have no time to proclaim it. And because of all this subtle activity of the devil seeking to silence the church that has the deposit of God, Paul, knowing the sacred deposit entrusted to him, knowing the imminence of his own martyrdom, knowing the natural weaknesses of Timothy, knowing the extreme subtlety of the devil, issues to Timothy this fourfold charge. Guard it.

The gospel is a treasure. Guard it. Suffer for it.

The gospel is an offense to people. Be willing to suffer for it. The gospel is a path.

Continue in it. The gospel is good news. Proclaim it.

Who is sufficient for these things? And I want to finish with two little phrases which I've so far omitted. If you like, they are Paul's very last words before he died, and they seem to summarize so much of his message. The first is in verse 22.

The Lord be with you. Grace be with you. The Lord has been with me, says Paul.

He stood by me, strengthened me. Now, Timothy, the Lord be with you. Grace be with you.

The other is at the end of verse 18. To him be the glory forever and ever. I don't think there can be a better summary of Paul's life and ambition, that in our heavy responsibilities to which God calls us, we need to receive grace from Christ, to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

We need to receive grace from Christ, and then we need to give glory to Christ. From him, grace. To him, glory.

And in all our Christian life and service, we have no other philosophy than this. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for the Apostle Paul.

We thank you that although he was cold and lonely and wanted his books and very frail, yet you enabled him by your grace to fight the good fight and finish the course and keep the faith. We thank you that he entrusted this solemn charge and responsibility to young Timothy. We thank you that today the same solemn charge comes to us.

Lord Jesus, raise up in our own day a generation of men and women in the church who are not ashamed of the gospel, who will guard its truth, be willing to suffer for it, continue faithfully in it, and proclaim it to others with urgency. And in that generation, we humbly pray that you will number us for your namesake. Amen.

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