Useful to the Master (2 Kings 2:1-15 and 2 Timothy 2:1-26) 25-Oct-26

2 Kings 2:1-15

Elijah Taken Up to Heaven

2 When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and
Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. **2** Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay
here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel.”
But Elisha said, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave
you.” So they went down to Bethel.
3 The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, “Do you
know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?”
“Yes, I know,” Elisha replied, “so be quiet.”
4 Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, Elisha; the Lord has sent me to Jericho.”
And he replied, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.”
So they went to Jericho.
5 The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, “Do
you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?”
“Yes, I know,” he replied, “so be quiet.”
6 Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.”
And he replied, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave
you.” So the two of them walked on.
7 Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance,
facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. **8** Elijah took
his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right
and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.
9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you
before I am taken from you?”
“Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied.
10 “You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am
taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.”
11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of
fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went
up to heaven in a whirlwind. **12** Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My
father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more. Then
he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.
13 Elisha then picked up Elijah’s cloak that had fallen from him and went back
and stood on the bank of the Jordan. **14** He took the cloak that had fallen from

Elijah and struck the water with it. “Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.
15 The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, “The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.” And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

2 Timothy 2:1-26
The Appeal Renewed
2 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. 3 Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. 5 Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor’s crown except by competing according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. 7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.
8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.
11 Here is a trustworthy saying:
If we died with him,
we will also live with him;
12 if we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;
13 if we are faithless,
he remains faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.
Dealing With False Teachers
14 Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. 15 Do

your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. [16] Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. [17] Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, [18] who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. [19] Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."
[20] In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. [21] Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. [22] Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. [23] Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. [24] And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. [25] Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, [26] and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

I encourage you to have your **Bibles opened** firstly at **2 Timothy chapter 2.**

Let's pray…

Intro

We're continuing our series on the Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy, a young minister in Ephesus facing opposition, false teaching and discouragement.

Writing from prison shortly before his execution, Paul encourages Timothy to stand firm in the Gospel [Explain Good News]

In this chapter - chapter 2, Paul explains how Timothy can be **useful to his Master**, Jesus Christ.

As I thought about being useful this week – it reminded me of a saying people used in Manchester when I was growing up – "***you're about as useful as a chocolate teapot***"

Hopefully – our usefulness to our Master (Jesus) will be a bit better than that…

[Slide-1st Point]

Paul's 1st point – we are **Useful to the Master – by Passing on the Gospel** – vv1-7

Useful to the Master – by Passing on the Gospel (2 Tim 2:1-7)

Looking at verse 1 – Paul, as Timothy's spiritual father calls him "***my son***".

Not for the first time - Paul tells Timothy to be strong!

In fact – Paul tells Timothy - 25 times - to be strong!

But notice Timothy is not to be strong under his own steam – but He is to be "***strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus***".

Paul says Phil 4:13 "***I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength***" (Phil 4:13) and in 2 Cor 12:9 Paul says "***God's grace is sufficient for him, for my power is made perfect in weakness.***"

So as we pass on the Gospel – we are doing it through the grace and strength of Jesus!

Then comes one a key verse – v2 – Paul says to Timothy - ***And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.***

This is a verse we often use at our planning meetings for children's ministry – because the teachers of our children - have been **entrusted** with God's Word and are **qualified (faithful)** to teach the Gospel

V2 is a picture of passing on the baton of teaching the Gospel to the next generation.

This is where our OT reading from 2 Kings 2:1-15 comes in.

Where the prophet Elijah – like the Apostle Paul – is coming to the end of his ministry – and so Elijah passes on the baton to the young prophet Elisha.

Just like Timothy has been learning from his mentor Paul – the young prophet Elisha has been learning from his mentor Elijah. And notice how closely Elisha follows Elijah around – hanging on to every word of Elijah – until he's taken up in a chariot – in a whirlwind – in to Heaven!

Just like Timothy had to depend on God's grace and strength to continue God's work – Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit – from God – so that he will have the strength to continue God's work

Just like Timothy is to pick up the Gospel message and pass it on to others – likewise Elisha is to pick up Elijah's cloak [which is a symbol of Elijah's ministry] – and Elisha is to continue God's work – once Elijah has departed

And just like Timothy is to entrust the Gospel to reliable people – Elisha entrusts God's work to a company of prophets from Jericho.

Passing on the Gospel to others – multiplies the number of believers in Jesus!

Challenge: W**ho is your Timothy or your Timothea – to pass on the Gospel to**?
Challenge: Is God calling you to teach children SRE in our schools or to teach children at Friday Jaffa or Sunday Jaffa? You can even come and check it out what these ministries look like. Just see me afterwards!

Paul then gives **three analogies** of what we need to be like – as we <u>do</u> pass on the Gospel

1st – V3 – we are to be **like a good soldier** – not an ordinary soldier – not a lazy soldier – not a cowardly soldier – but the bravest of brave soldiers – who is prepared to suffer hardship for our commanding officer – Jesus!
And v4 - a soldier who doesn't get involved in the distractions of this world [civilian matters] but serves and obeys our commanding officer!
Challenge: Are we willing to suffer hardship for the sake of passing the Gospel of Jesus on to others?

2nd – V5 – we are to be **like an athlete** – who competes according to the rules of the race to receive the victor's crown. It is possible to fall into the mistake of thinking that we can make up our own rules for our life. For example someone might say: "***I know this is sin, but God understands, so I'll just keep going in this sin***." This goes against the attitude of an athlete who must compete according to the rules.

Challenge: Are we being like an obedient athlete – and faithfully and obediently passing on the Gospel?

3rd – v6 – we are to be like **a hardworking farmer** – A farmer is one of the most difficult and patient occupations – If we are like a farmer in passing on the Gospel – we will work hard, be patient with people – and Paul's says we will then share in the harvest – as more and more people come to believe in Jesus!

Challenge: Are we willing to work hard and patiently pass on the Gospel?

Paul wants Timothy and us – v7 – to reflect deeply on these three analogies – and he promises that the Lord will give us insight.

For example – one insight might be:

Each of these three occupations needs great perseverance to succeed.

- The soldier who stops fighting before the battle is finished will never see victory.
- The athlete who stops running before the race is over will never win the race.
- The farmer who stops working before the harvest is complete will never see the fruit of his crops.

To be useful to the master – we must persevere and never stop passing on the Gospel!

[Slide-2nd Point]

Paul's 2nd point – we are **Useful to the Master – by Handling God's Word Faithfully** – vv8-19

Useful to the Master – by Handling God's Word Faithfully (2 Tim 2:8-19)

In v8 – Paul brings us to the very heart of the Christian faith: ***Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my Gospel***.

First, Jesus is risen from the dead. Without the resurrection, there is no Christian hope of eternal life. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, ***if Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile.***

Second, Jesus is descended from King David. In 2 Samuel 7, God promised David that a king from his line would reign forever. Jesus is that promised King. He is not a dead hero but our living Saviour, and God has kept His promise!

Paul is so convinced of this truth that, in verse 9, he is willing to suffer and be chained like a criminal for preaching the Gospel.

Challenge: Do we truly believe that God's Word is the truth? And are we prepared to stand firm in that truth, even if it costs us our freedom?

Thankfully, Paul reminds us that although *he* is chained, ***God's Word is not chained!*** (v9)

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that ***God's Word is alive and active***. It can cut to the heart, expose our sin and convict us, but it also brings comfort and healing to our troubled hearts.

God promises in Isaiah 55:11 that His Word will accomplish the purpose for which He sends it. Throughout history, Bibles have been burned and Christians persecuted, yet God's Word continues to change lives and advance His kingdom.

Paul is so convinced of the Gospel that, in verse 10, he is willing to endure everything so that others may hear the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ!

Challenge: Do we have ***FOMO***—not a fear of us missing out, but a concern that others might miss out on knowing Jesus? Could we write down our testimony and share it with family and friends, or even here at church?

To show how to handle God's Word faithfully – Paul then gives a trustworthy statement in vv11-13 which consists of 4 statements which explain the Gospel in a nutshell.

i. ***If we died with him, we will also live with him*****.** United with Christ, we have forgiveness and the hope of resurrection.

ii. ***If we endure, we will also reign with him*****.** As we persevere in faith, we look forward to sharing in Christ's glory.

iii. ***If we disown him, he will also disown us*****.** We must take seriously the warning against rejecting Christ.

iv. ***If we are faithless, he remains faithful*****.** Christ remains true to His character and promises, including His warnings.

These statements offer both encouragement and warning. God's faithfulness is not permission to turn away from Christ; we must continue to trust and follow Him.

Paul then tells Timothy to keep reminding people of these truths (v14). This is key to our mission as Christians: **to make disciples and pass on the Gospel**.

But Paul warns against getting bogged down in quarrelling about words. Examples of this might be – spending the whole Bible study arguing over the meaning of a Hebrew or Greek Word – and people insisting they are right. Or – arguing which Bible version – NIV, ESV, KJV – has the best translation. Or – insisting on the exact timing of Jesus' return. [Example Michael Drosnin's book The Bible Code as another waste of time!]

Paul goes on to say – v15 – that Timothy and us – must present ourselves to God – ***as one approved, a worker who is not ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth!***

God's Word must be handled carefully. We cannot simply make the Bible say whatever we want it to say. We must work hard to understand what God is actually teaching us.

For example – you will hear people saying "we're not meant to judge" based on Matthew 7:1 ("***Do not judge, or you too will be judged***"). But this verse does not mean we must never identify wrong behaviour. Jesus Himself called out sinful behaviour all the time. Matthew 7:2 explains the point: we will be judged by the same standard we use to judge others. What Jesus is forbidding is unfair, hypocritical and judgmental attitudes, not the discernment between right and wrong.

Paul then warns Timothy against "***godless chatter***" (v16)—empty talk that does not build people up in the truth but leads them further into ungodliness. He

gives the example of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were claiming that the ***resurrection of believers had already happened*** (v18).

We are not told exactly what their teaching was but it's likely they taught that when a person first believes in Jesus they were "spiritually" resurrected and dismissed the truth that believers one day get a resurrected physical body.

Notice how serious this is. False teaching is not simply a matter of having a different opinion. It can lead people away from the truth of the gospel.

That's why Paul uses the picture of gangrene – just like infection can spread and damage the body, false teaching can spread through a church and destroy the faith of some of God's people (v17)

But in verse 19, Paul gives Timothy a word of reassurance: "***God's solid foundation stands firm***." Despite the damage false teaching can cause, God's purposes remain secure. ***The Lord knows those who belong to him***, and ***those who profess his name must turn away from wickedness***.

So, we must handle God's Word faithfully, stand firm in the truth and live lives that honour the Lord.

[Slide-3rd point]

Paul's 3rd point – We are **Useful to the Master – by Pursuing Holiness** – vv20-22

Useful to the Master – by Pursuing Holiness (2 Tim 2:20-22)

Imagine offering someone a drink in a dirty cup. It might be an expensive cup with gold trim, but it is not fit for the purpose. Likewise, God is not simply concerned with how gifted we are or how much we know. He wants us to pursue holiness so that we are fit for his service.

That's Paul's point in his illustration in vv20-21 of a large house, some utensils are made of gold and silver, others of wood and clay. ***Some are used for special occasions and others for ordinary use.*** Paul says that if we cleanse ourselves from what is dishonourable, we will be **"*useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*"**

But what does pursuing holiness look like in practice?

Verse 22 tells us: we ***must flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.***

Notice that Paul gives us both a negative and a positive command. We must **flee what is sinful and pursue what is godly**. Holiness is not simply about avoiding the wrong things; it is about **actively growing** in Christlike character and encouraging one another in our faith.

In practice, that means being honest when it's tempting to lie; forgiving when we'd rather hold a grudge; refusing to gossip when others are doing it; turning away from temptation. It also means studying God's Word and growing in faith alongside other Christians.

It's not just about avoiding sin; it's about becoming more like Jesus.

[Slide-final point]

Which bring us to **Paul's final point** - We are **Useful to the Master – By Being More Like Jesus** – vv23-26

Useful to the Master – by Being More Like Jesus (2 Tim 2:23-26)

You see, it's not just about head knowledge of God's Word; it's about putting God's Word into practice in our hearts and in our lives. Romans 8:29 tells us that God's purpose is to make us more like Jesus.

Paul describes what this looks like:

- **V23 - Avoiding foolish and stupid arguments that create division** (v23) – For example, arguing over whether a particular hymn should have been sung at church, rather than focusing on worshipping God together [Did Adam and Eve have belly buttons?]
- **V24 - Being kind to everyone, able to teach and not resentful**. For example - Rather than becoming frustrated with someone who struggles to understand the Bible, we kindly and patiently explain the truth again and help them grow in their understanding.
- **V25 - Correcting opponents with gentleness**. For example, when someone gives a wrong understanding of the Bible, rather than ridiculing them or aggressively telling them they are wrong, we patiently open Scripture with them and explain what God's Word teaches. Our aim is not to win an argument or embarrass the person, but to help them come to understand God's truth
- **And vv25-26 seeking the restoration of opponents by praying that God will bring them to repentance and freedom from the devil's snare** (vv25–26). For example, rather than writing off someone who opposes the truth, we pray that God will bring them to repentance and free them from the devil's snare. Our goal is not to defeat them but to see them restored to the truth and serving God faithfully.

As we become more like Jesus in our attitudes, words and actions, others will see Christ in us. And our prayer is that they, too, will come to know and follow Him.

Conclusion/Questions

To finish up then…

Throughout this passage, Paul has been reminding Timothy what it means to be **useful to the Master**.

So let me leave us with **two questions to ask ourselves...**

[Slide-Q1]

First, am I making myself **useful to the Master** by growing in holiness, standing firm in the truth, and treating others with patience and gentleness?

[Slide-Q2]

Second, am I helping others become **useful to the Master**? Am I passing on the gospel and helping others grow in their faith?

(pause)

[Slide-Prayer]

Perhaps we could pray this simple prayer…

Jesus, Lord and Master, make me useful to you today—and help me prepare others to be useful to you tomorrow. In Jesus Name. Amen.