

2 Timothy 1:10-18

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[0 : 0 0] Now we looked last Wednesday at the opening part, the first part of 2 Timothy chapter 1. And we took it as far as verse 10, where Paul had been talking about how according to the Lord's own purpose, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest, declared by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who had abolished death and brought life and immortality to life through the gospel.

So that's where we left off, and it's worth just reiterating again how God's plan of salvation has been there from all eternity. Those who are elect and saved in the heart of the Father from before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1, for example, we read all this about predestination, how the Lord is chosen before the foundation of the world, and so on. So this was always his intention. It was always his plan to redeem a people unto himself.

According to our, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. So that also indicates to us that the intention to save and the offering of Christ as the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, is a relationship, or rather a covenant, that has been entered into between the persons of the Trinity before even the first day of creation happened.

However, that being an eternal covenant, as may be, Paul's point is that it is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The fact that now God has come in the flesh means that the time is now, and the opportunity now to be right with God is brought right into, as it were, our immediate presence.

[1 : 5 0] Christ is making this salvation immediately available. It was always available through faith, by means of the sacrifices and the covenant that God had set out for his people, but it was limited to one nation throughout the world.

God preserving through that one vessel that through which his own Messiah, the Son of God, would be brought forth. But now that he's been brought forth, it can be spread to everybody.

And that says, it's rather like if you've got a key ingredient in a highly nutritious meal, it's kept in its packet, it's kept in its jug, in its container, but then it's added in.

It's added into the mix and you pour it all out and you pour it all in and then you serve up this fantastic meal. Once you've done that, once you've poured it out and it defeats so many people and can be spread around, you don't keep the container anymore.

Or not as a container, you might use it for something else or whatever, but it has now served its purpose. And although Israel after the flesh will always be precious in the sight of God, and he still has, Scripture teaches, a particular purpose for the people of Israel yet, yet the purpose of the container, the vessel, that instrument through which Christ was brought, in other words, the covenant line all the way down to the time of Christ coming into the midst of the people of Israel, the need for that container, that vessel, as such a vessel, is no longer there.

[3 : 2 1] The Gospel is now being spread throughout all the world, is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Now, as far as this is concerned, our Saviour Jesus Christ, life and immortality and so on, again, Godly Bishop Pearson from the 17th century, that I've quoted in the past, I'll just see what he says about this, and I'll quote, if Christ were not the life, remember how John 14 says, I am the way, the truth and the life, if Christ were not the life, then the dead could never live.

If he were not the resurrection, he says to Martha, you know, John 11, I am the resurrection of the life. If he were not the resurrection, they could never rise. But if he did not have the keys of hell and death, as he's quoted as having, Revelation chapter 1, verse 18, then we could never break through the bars of death and the gates of hell.

You know, Christ has said the gates of hell will never prevail against his church, and that's true, but that's because he unlocks it, because he's got the key. You know, his people left to themselves don't have any power.

We don't have the power to break through the gates of death. We don't have the power to break through the bars or the gates of hell, but Christ has the keys and unlocks the door and lets his people free.

[4 : 46] How? Because he brings life and immortality to life, life that is in him. There is no eternal life, life in all its fullness, outside of Christ.

He has brought it to life out into the open, when Christ has appeared, made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ. So, life, this is what life consists of, you know.

And this, I think, if we remember, this is what Jesus actually prays with his disciples and we turn back to John 17. I think, I don't find the exact reference story, it's just, I can't use that.

Where he says, you know, And this, and thou hast given power over all flesh, you have eternal life to as many as thou hast given them. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

John 17, verse 3 there. So, there would be no life if Christ had not come, life in all its fullness. There would be no immortality. He wouldn't be brought out into the open.

[5 : 46] But there's also this phrase, which has always slightly troubled me, I suppose, if you think about it, has abolished death. And we think, well, okay, fine, yeah, but we know what it means in terms of eternal life or eternal death.

He's abolished the power of death, yes, but, you know, we still have death, don't we? I mean, every single one of us has been bereaved to some extent, whether it's by a granny or grandpa or an auntie or perhaps a relation closer to us than that.

But we've all experienced bereavement. And we all know what it's like. And so, is it true to say it's abolished death? Well, we have to bear in mind that when something is abolished, it doesn't cease to exist, but rather it is stripped of its power.

If you think about, for example, revolutions that have happened in the past, you can say the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution or whatever. Yes, fearful bloodshed and so on, but one feature of such revolutions would be the abolition of, say, the monarchy.

The abolition of the Tsarist monarchy in Russia, the abolition of the monarchy in France, so on and so on. And what does that mean? Does that mean, well, the king ceases? All his family suddenly vanish and disappear?

[7 : 00] No, they might subsequently be murdered or executed, as happened. But that's not the issue there. The point is, they would still be in existence.

They would still be around, but stripped of all their power. The individual who had once sat on the throne would still be living. He'd still be going about just as a very ordinary person. He would no longer be your majesty, before whom everybody bows and everybody obeys and so on.

He would exist, but stripped of all his power. Likewise, at the Reformation, when the Scottish Parliament and the Reformers abolished the authority of the Pope in Scotland.

The Pope didn't cease to exist, and his followers didn't cease to exist, but in terms of the law and in terms of the country, was stripped of all his power, in that sense.

So when something is abolished, when you abolish slavery, it doesn't mean that the masters ceased to exist and the slaves ceased to exist. It's just that the slave owner is stripped of his power.

[8 : 01] The slave himself, or herself, is freed from the power that the master had over them. But they haven't ceased to exist. They're still there. The people who were the slaves, the people who were the masters, are still there.

But the power has been abolished. It has been stripped away. So that although all these things, to all intents and purposes, and all the players, as it were, on the stage, are still there, it is stripped of its power.

Now I think it's in this sense we should understand it abolished death. It has not ceased to exist. It is still there. We know what it's like. We've all experienced it.

But it is stripped of its power. Because for those who are in Christ, the life and immortality has been brought to life, it has no power anymore.

It has no strength. In 1 Corinthians 15, we read verses 25 and 26, He must reign till they have put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, which we might say shall reign until the resurrection.

[9 : 13] You might say. And then, just as with Christ, although death had a certain power over His body, He rose again the third day, and so even that power was broken.

It was stripped of its power. And the power that death seems to have over us will be proven to be hollow and empty and worthless when we rise again.

As we all, our souls will immediately rise to be with the Lord if we are in Christ. And our bodies will rise at the last day because that is what Scripture reveals, and that is the example that Christ has set going before us.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. The implication is that it still exists, but stripped of its power. Think of an example. If you think about the end of the Second World War, when quite clearly the Third Reich and the Nazi powers were defeated, it would have been the easiest thing in the world for the Allies simply to wipe the slate clean and just obliterate all the leadership and all the Nazi leaders and so on.

But they didn't. Why didn't they? Why did they allow some of the senior leaders to remain in post? Why did they indeed carve out a little enclave where the Third Reich government, after Hitler was dead, was still in place and where it was maintained and protected by the Allies for days afterwards, into May 1945?

[10 : 41] Why? So that there would still be a nominal and legal head of state to sign the surrender documents. If they hadn't done that, then there would have been some who would have said, fanatics or whatever, would have said, no, no, no, we never surrendered.

No, no, no, no, we never surrendered. In fact, we'll just wait for the right time and raise up some old regiments and group some old armies and so on. No, no, no, we never surrendered. Where's the proof? Where's the document? Where's the legal title?

There never was anything signed. So this is why they had to, in order to make sure everything was properly, legally signed and sealed by a legitimate and inverted commas, head of state and representatives of the Third Reich, in order to achieve that proper signing and legal handover of power, unconditional surrender, that regime, albeit in miniature, had to be kept in place, albeit in a little protected inquiry, so that its technical leaders could legally, technically, correctly sign all the documents and push through the unconditional surrender, but they could only do that if they existed, if they were allowed to continue to exist.

But they didn't have any power. They didn't have any real power because the war was over. The war had been lost as far as the Third Reich was concerned, but they were maintained in order to complete the surrender.

And I would suggest to you, in this sense that, you know, 1 Corinthians 15, the last thing that shall be destroyed is death. For now, it is kept in its hollow shell, kept in its hollow place.

[12 : 22] It's in existence, but it is completely defeated. As we read, you know, a little further on in 1 Corinthians 15, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Yes, you're still there, O death. But where's thy sting? Where's thy power? You haven't got any. You haven't got any power over those who are in Christ. All you're doing, when you take, finally, when the soul departs from the body of the believer, is that soul goes immediately to be with Christ.

All you're doing is opening the gates of glory for them. Death, you haven't won anything. Where's your power? Where's your sting? Where's your victory? And that verse, of course, is itself a referencing of Hosea chapter 13, verse 14.

In the Old Testament, I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues. O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

So the power of death is broken, although technically, it's still in existence. And this is what we understand, or I think we should understand in terms of Christ, who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to life.

[13 : 34] Abolition doesn't mean ceases to exist. It means stripped of its power. And it's no longer any power. Where unto, I am appointed, Paul says, a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles.

Now it's exactly the same format that he uses there as in 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 16, where we, a very part, yeah, a very part, chapter 2, verse 7, who says, where unto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle, I speak the truth in Christ, and I am a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

So first of all, a preacher, the proclamation of the gospel. Secondly, he mentions that he is an apostle. That means sent, sent specifically by Christ. And a teacher, one who sort of unpacks and explains to the Gentiles who had no knowledge of this before.

You know, to an extent, to a Jewish audience, Paul can reference the Old Testament scriptures and refer to the prophets and the law and so on, and they'll say, oh yeah, I don't know if you're in it.

They know what he's talking about because they're steeped in it. It's like a sense of activity from a child that was known in the scriptures. And that would be the case for most Jewish audiences in the synagogue in which he preaches.

[14 : 44] It won't be the case for the Gentiles. They won't have a clue what he's talking about unless they are taught, unless they have it explained to them. So the Gentile Christians, yes, they would have believed in Christ and yes, they would have accepted Christ, but they'd have an awful lot of a steep learning curve to do.

They'd have to really sort of immerse themselves in the Old Testament scriptures and be discovering more and more, deepening their knowledge of Christ all the time through the scriptures. They had a lot of catching up to do.

So they needed a teacher. They needed someone to help them. Teacher of the Gentiles, for which cause I also suffer these things. Now, of course, wherever the good news is proclaimed, the powers of this world will be against it.

And almost invariably, when the gospel is opposed, you will find that it is usually the powers that be in a particular state in the world that are against it.

Why are they against it? Because they can't control it. They will be quite happy with some state-honoring form of religion. Just as, for example, the official state Chinese church, the Free Self-Patriotic Movement, as they call it.

[15 : 58] And even that is beginning to get a bit too Christian for the government's liking there. In the same way, people, governments, kings, and so on, they like to have a state church. You know, even in Russia just now, where rival-believing Christians are persecuted for the Russian Orthodox Church, that's protected.

That's okay, because the state reckons it can control that. The governments of the day, men like to have religion under their thumb. It's okay, it's quite a useful thing for them, so they're quite happy to have it in place as long as people acknowledge their supreme authority.

And, of course, that's what happened in Britain as well, to an extent, the government demanding rule and power over the church's decision-making.

That's why, for example, in the Church of England, the Queen is still, technically, supreme governor of the Church of England. It's why, in the Church of Scotland, just before the disruption, that's what caused it.

The state seeking to impose state legislation, state law, onto the decision-making courts of the Church. And where the Lord's people can only have ultimately one power to whom they answer in terms of the things of the Lord.

[17 : 15] We are taught to be good citizens. We are to pray for those in authority over us. We are to obey all the laws of the land and fulfil them diligently in so far as they are not contrary to what God has revealed in his Word.

That we can have ultimately only one King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So for this cause I suffer these things. That's why he's in prison. Because the powers of this world recognise the danger, the explosive power of the Gospel.

And so those who will proclaim it will be, to an extent, curtailed, persecuted, in prison. For which cause I suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed. For I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that thing.

Now this is quite a famous verse. I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded that he is able to keep it out and trust it against that day. And often it gets quoted on its own, kind of in isolation.

But the context here of it is a little bit more kind of a challenge. Because remember that the underlying, the background music here is almost like Timothy is perhaps not quite as red hot as once he was.

[18 : 25] perhaps not quite as loyal or faithful to Paul as once he was. Maybe he is just cooling a wee bit. That is the sort of underlying subtext here.

That is the background music. And perhaps the way to understand this verse is for which cause I also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed.

But I know whom I have believed. And there is almost that challenge there. I am not ashamed. Are you Timothy? Are you ashamed of my chin? Are you ashamed of this gospel which has brought me to prison and it might well bring you into trouble?

And it has caused various problems for various preachers. Just I was in the early church here. Timothy, are you ashamed? I am not ashamed. I am in prison but I am happy. I am content because I know whom I have believed.

And I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. That which is, as it were, committed to him sort of deposited on trust is the sense of it here.

[19 : 26] And what is he entrusted in the Lord's has he? His very life. His soul, everything. He has invested his whole self into this message, into this gospel, into this kingdom.

And he has done so in the belief that that investment will come good at the last. That he will not be the poorer, he will not be the loser for having done so.

And his confidence in that is not based on the confidence you know, well, I did my best at the end of the day and I gave it my best shot and you know, I wasn't bad, I have to admit.

I wasn't as good as some, but I wasn't as good as bad as others. So, you know, I should be alright at the end of the day. No. What is his confidence? It's not himself. It's not his own abilities. I know whom I believe and I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed unto him against that day.

In other words, his confidence is Jesus Christ. His confidence is the Lord himself and that must be the confidence of every true born again Christian.

[20 : 30] All too often, even within the church of Jesus Christ, you will get this sort of mealy mouth shrugging of a say, well, I hope I'll have done you all. I hope God will be merciful at the end of the day.

Well, you know, I just, I don't know if I'll be there or not, if I'll be saved or not, but I hope God will be merciful to me. This is people looking to themselves. It's saying, well, you know, God's updating glory, but, you know, I have to do the best I can.

Well, I haven't done as well as some, of course, but not as bad as others. Who cares what we are like? Yes, we should be faithful. Yes, we should be doing our best, but that's a servant.

That's not in terms of earning anything. What we are like doesn't matter one job or two. Ultimately, before the Lord accepted, insofar as we have reflected his love back to him, we have sought to be faithful, yes, but at the end of the day, we are unprofitable servants.

In terms of our salvation, who cares how good or bad you and I have been? Who cares how good or bad Paul has been or Timothy? At the end of the day, it's how good is Christ?

[21 : 35] Christ, and that is the confidence of every born-again soul. How good is Christ? Christ is perfect. Christ is sinless.

Christ's sacrifice is once and for all upon the cross. It is sufficient for the Father's justice. That is our confidence.

I know whom I have believed and I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed against that day when I stand before him at the last.

So hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard in me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Now, sadly, this verse 13, really in the original the sense is just to sort of, you know, keep, preserve.

The English has translated it more with a hold fast, you know, that emphatic sort of sense in which, as one accountant in the record this month had, you know, somebody described how they were given a coin where a boy clutched it so tight that the king's head was imprinted, the image of the king's face was imprinted on their hand because they clutched it so tight and that's the sense in which I'd love to be able to say to you, yes, hold fast in this sense until it's imprinted on your heart but that's not actually what the original says.

[22 : 58] It's an over-enthusiastic translation here we might say. It really just means keep, preserve, you know, intact the form of sound words and form of sound words here, we've got to bear in mind that the luxury of having the scriptures in front of us which we're all educated enough to read and which, allowing for variations within some translations, do not change substantially.

And once you have it written down, you can reference and cross-reference against, well, is this thing right now? What do the scriptures say? What does the Bible say? What does God say in his word?

So you can always go back to it, the unchanging word. They wouldn't have had that for hundreds of years, a thousand and a half years they wouldn't have had it.

Most people, how would they know the form of sound words? Because they would preserve orally, verbally, intact. They would recite and remember, catechized, if you like, as everybody was at one stage not so long ago.

And they would memorize and catechize the forms of the teaching, the doctrine that they were taught and it would be sucked in and trotted out and it would be retained in this way.

[24 : 16] People had to memorize. People had to retain, to preserve, intact, that which they were here. if they didn't have reference to the written word, which for most of history people didn't, they were dependent on oral transmission and oral preservation.

And it is vital, Paul says, when you're teaching everybody here, you can't go around and they're all saying, look here in your Bible, it says, or look here in the scroll, it says that. And they look at it, it just squiggly lines on a page, if they're illiterate, they can't read.

So the form of sound works, this is one reason, probably, how, ironically, recited prayers came to be part of the early church. because people weren't quite sure, you know, how should we pray, what should we say, and so they were taught, set form prayers, which is fine as a help, but if it becomes all you've got, then it's not much help.

It's like packaging for food. The food is the main thing. The packaging is helpful. Having the right box or the right bag that's all sealed up and so on, that's helpful to keep everything in place and in line, but you know, it's the food that you need.

The packaging, you try and eat that as an instead of, it's not going to do you any good at all. It's not going to help. So this sense of hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus, that good thing which was committed unto thee by the Holy Ghost, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

[25 : 47] And us doesn't just mean Timothy and me, you know, Paul and Timothy. It means all of us who are in Christ. And one reason why is to do that is this, that I know as all of you which are in Asia be turned away from me.

Now the sense here is not so much, oh I've heard that all those in Ephesus and Asia, oh they've stopped loving me, whoever, no. The sense is of those who had come, representatives who had come from Asia, from Ephesus, this is Asia Minor in terms of the Roman province, had come to Rome but had ignored Paul.

They had not helped him, they had not stood by him, they had not visited him, they hadn't bothered with him, they had ignored him, they didn't seek him out. You know, he says chapter 4 verse 16, and my first answer, no man stood with me but all men forsooth me.

I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Why would you not seek to support the apostle of God? Why would you not seek to not hold him?

Probably because if he's been identified as a troublemaker by the authorities, if he's in prison, if he's under sentence and execution, what some will be looking for is, of course, we're not like him, Mr. Governor, Mr. Emperor, we're nice, we're good, but we're not like this troublemaker, you know, you can be nice to us, it's okay, we don't have anything to do with him, no, we haven't even seen him while we've been in, no, no, no, no, deal with us, I'm not sure we can come to some accommodation but, you know, we don't have anything to do with him, we don't really know him anymore, so it's almost certainly in order to make things better for themselves in their own condition that they want to have nothing to do with Paul, all they which are in Asia, those who are now back in Asia who were in Rome are, is the sense of it, turned away from me, they've had nothing to do with me, they ignore it as if I didn't exist, of whom are Phrygillus and Hermogenes, now, we might read this and think, oh, yeah, they're the windweeds, but rather we might say, well, why is he referencing these two people, among whom, you know, of whom are, we would say in modern terminology we'd say including, including Phrygillus and Hermogenes, so why including them?

[28 : 01] Probably because these two are mutual acquaintances of Paul and Timothy, probably because maybe they've had conversations about them, maybe they had known them before, maybe they had had personal contact and they had thought of them as faithful friends, but you know, everybody's turned away, you might say, even Phrygillus and Hermogenes, including Phrygillus and Hermogenes, of whom are them as well have turned away.

But by contrast, the Lord gave mercy to the house of Anesiphorus, for he hath oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain, and when he was in Rome he sought at me out very diligently and found me the Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

And how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus down most very well. Now, this does not imply, some common people suggest, that Anesiphorus is now dead. Paul does not have or recognise prayer for the dead.

The fact that he's saying to Timothy, the house of Anesiphorus, possibly simply implies Anesiphorus was at Rome and may now be in his journey homework, or if he's not at home just now, then the Lord blessed his house because he oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain.

While he was in Rome he sought me out very diligently and found me the Lord grant unto him present tense that he may in other words in the future find mercy of the Lord in that day.

[29 : 29] That's not saying oh well, you know, rest in peace and go and rest his soul sort of thing but it's rather saying the Lord blessed him and his house for the goodness he did to me. Now, what would he have done?

Possibly brought him some provisions, maybe brought him some food or some water or maybe some parchments or scrolls something just through and comes when you've got nothing even a little makes a difference.

When you've got no visitors one visitor makes a difference. When you're short of food every little helps. When you're suffering and struggling and everybody's being bad dear one person of his kind dear can make all the difference.

So the Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day. How good he was to be in Ephesus? Well, Timothy, you know fine about that because you're there too. You saw it too. You understand that as well.

Again, notice there's almost a contrast here. Unless a forest came looking for me. Unless a forest looked after me when I was in Ephesus. You know that, Timothy.

[30 : 30] Timothy, and there's almost just a hint of, you know, where were you, Timothy? I was looking for you. I was trusting in you. I hoped you might be a bit more supportive.

And there's just this, as we say, this subtext here. And I'd say, why is he saying these things unless there's some implication that maybe Timothy isn't quite as supportive as perhaps Paul had hoped.

But he's bending over backwards not to be critical and not to be admonishing. He's just drawing attention to somebody who has been very faithful. Now, as we leave this chapter, it should remind us that just as our Lord says, you know, if you give even somebody a cup of cold water in the name of Christ or because he belonged to Christ or because they belonged to Christ, you know, you won't lose your reward.

And things that seem nothing to us, they can make a big difference to the person concerned. What may seem just a little thing to you, just a kindly word or a wee thought or a wee letter maybe of picking up the phone to somebody and it may seem like almost nothing to you.

You know, remember Matthew 25 where those who are counting as well say, Lord, why did we see you in prison and visit us? Why did we encourage, why did we clothe you or do any of that for you?

[31 : 51] And he says, well, when you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren did it for me. the littlest thing that we are able to do if we do it and do it faithfully can make a huge difference.

Perhaps unbeknownst to us can make a huge difference to those who are receiving it because we don't know their situation. Which means that whatever we have the opportunity of doing, whenever we have the opportunity to do some good, however small it may seem, do it.

For goodness sake, do it. Just do that little, write that letter or pick up the phone and make that visit or say that word of encouragement instead of just keeping quiet or whatever it might be.

Hold up, help, encourage, strengthen somebody if you can, if it's in your power to do it, do it. You'll never regret doing the right thing but you might often regret not having taken the opportunity when it was there.

The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day for him and for all of us that seek the Father in Christ.