

Passing the Gospel Through Generations

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good evening. And I might refer to this a few times, but I'm not being slovingly dressed tonight with my Father's Day jumper on. I know that my signature blue shirt is lying on the back seat, but this is a Father's Day shirt before anybody asks.
- And Esther's not here tonight, but Esther took this little picture of Caleb and I not long after he was born. So that was my present from Caleb today.
- So, and I am going to refer to that, so I'm not just excusing it for that today. But it is interesting because it does actually slightly tie into what we're about to say tonight.
- Now, we're continuing in 2 Timothy, and we are now in chapter 2, as Aaron has read. And we'll spend a little bit of time this evening thinking about this.
- Now, I have made a monumental mistake. I can normally preach from an iPad, and I make the text big enough. And not that I need glasses, but I have it printed off. I always have a backup, and it's rather small. So you might see me peering at this.
- [1 : 0 6] I'll just ask that you forgive me. Now, I want to ask you a question. And it's not particularly well lit on the screen there, but does anybody know who these people are on the screen?
- I mean, spot on. Spot on. I'm impressed. But they are the various Louis. So they are Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI.
- And I need to be careful because we have a French man in our midst. But these are French kings. And there's an idiom that is often said, especially if you go on any tours.
- I've been to Paris hundreds of times. Not hundreds of times. I've been to Paris a number of times. I've got hundreds and hundreds of photographs. And every time that we go, there's a phrase that sticks in our head. And it says this. Louis XIV built it.
- Louis XV enjoyed it. And Louis XVI lost it. And I don't think I need to say a huge amount more in that for you to have the picture in your head around what that actually means.
- [2 : 0 8] You just need to go to the Palace of Versailles. And you will see that the France that Louis XIV built was just incredible.
- In fact, I think he is maybe called the greatest king of Europe. I might have that wrong, but I think that is right. And there's lots of good things that have been attributed to him. Now, I know that we could spend hours and hours on a history lesson on the French kings, which we're not going to do tonight.
- But there's lots of things that could be attributed to him. But one of the things that can be attributed to him is the fact that he built an incredible France. He's got an incredible legacy.
- And I'm sure there's lots of things that we wouldn't necessarily appreciate in his life. And, but there we go. Then you get the picture that Louis XV probably just enjoyed that.
- And Louis XVI, well, he lost it. And it kind of ties into what we're going to be thinking about tonight in our verse. And I'm sure that you can pretty much see where we're going with this tonight. But you can see here where we're going to go in 2 Timothy chapter 2.

[3 : 12] Now, the last two sessions that we've had from Craig and from Jonathan in chapter 1 have introduced us to some of the enduring themes throughout the letter of Timothy. You know, I think the slide that we had up there first, passing the baton of the gospel.

You know, this is an enduring theme throughout Timothy. It's why Craig has given the sermon series the title. At least I am attributed to you, Craig. He's given that sermon series the title, passing on the baton of the gospel.

And we're introduced to this quite early on. You see that in chapter 1, verse 5, where Paul writes to Timothy and he says to Timothy in that verse, he says, The faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you.

You know, Paul writes to him, fan it into flames, you know, keep it alive. Something that the French kings couldn't do. But we see that in this book in 2 Timothy.

We also, I think we see this in 2 Timothy as well, is Paul takes a bit of a step back and he looks at a much bigger picture than maybe we've seen in other letters that Paul has written, where he's specifically addressing conflict or sin or sorting out other issues in some of the churches that he writes to.

[4 : 26] In this letter that he's written to Timothy, he takes a bit of a step back. He's reflecting a bit more. And I am sure that as we go through that, you'll maybe see that.

Then Craig and Jonathan both took us through the fact that there was suffering in there. And I think this is another theme. And you see that there's a desertion that took place in Asia, verse 15 in chapter 1, where they've all deserted Paul.

And then he comes into chapter 2 and he writes this. He says, And Paul is calling Timothy a son and he's thinking about the things that he will pass on to him.

So I've got my jumper on tonight. It's an enormous responsibility where you have a child. You do take a step back and you do think about what are you passing on? What are you impressing on that individual?

And are they going to be able to continue some of the things that I would like Caleb to continue? And for parents in the room, or all of you have parents as well, there is probably some input into your lives that your parents would have liked for you to have continued.

[5 : 37] Whether that's a piano's lessons when you're 4, 5, and 6 and then you never touch that again. Or whatever it is, there's certainly an input into a child's life. And in this sense, Paul is writing to Timothy, not as his own personal child in that way, but a child of the faith.

It is the output of Paul's ministry into Timothy's life that has made Timothy who he is. Not singularly, because as I say, both in chapter 1 and in chapter 3, you see that Lois and Eunice, his grandmother and his mother, had an enormous part to play in that as well.

But they have all poured into Timothy. And in that verse, in verse 1, it says, You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Now, if I go back to the Lois here, you're going to see that the motivation and the will that was in, and the determination that was in Lois the 14th, wasn't passed on.

The wealth is passed on, the material wealth, maybe some of the, lots of different things will have been passed on. But that, let's call it the spirit that was in Lois the 14th, wasn't passed on.

[6 : 48] That will, that determination, that motivation, it wasn't passed on. But when Paul writes to Timothy, he says this, You know, it's not a strength that comes from within, by our own determination or by our own might.

It comes from the Lord Jesus. It is that that is going to be the continuing motivation in Timothy's life. That's going to be the source that's going to provide Timothy with the necessary grace that is going to be needed to keep him strong in this work.

And therefore, there is going to be, as we see later on in our message tonight, we're going to see that it can be passed on from generation to generation without fail, unlike the French dynasty.

Now, if we're going to be carrying out the work of God, and in this context, it is the transmission of the word of God, then we cannot do it on our own strength. You know, I think we can all affirm that in our own lives, but it is a truth that's taught in the scripture.

If we are going to work for God, and if we're going to carry out the transmission, so whether that's the preaching of the gospel, or in this context where Timothy is going to pass on what Paul has taught him, then we have to do it in the strength that is provided to us by the Lord Jesus.

[8 : 16] Now, if you're like me when you're reading and you're preparing, but certainly when we're having conversation in the house, quite often different verses will come to mind. It's something that encourages us at our growth group.

If we think that there's something going to be taught in scripture, if we think we're uncovering something in scripture, then where else in scripture is that being mentioned? It's a way that we can be sure that we are interpreting scripture in the way that it should be interpreted.

But, you know, if your mind is just wandering slightly there, and you're thinking, well, if that's the case, if we can't carry on God's work, and in this case it's the transmission of God's word in our own strength, well, is that something that the Bible teaches?

And you know this. We've taught it with the kids recently, you know, trust in the Lord and lean on your own understanding. At our wedding day, I've mentioned this from up here before, you know, Jim spoke on, you know, unless the Lord builds a house, then the laborers labor in vain.

A hymn that we could have sang tonight, it says, we rest on thee, our shield and our defender, we go not forth alone against the foe, strong in thy strength, safe in thy keeping tender, we rest on thee, and in thy name we go.

[9 : 20] You know, I think we are very familiar with the fact that as Christians, we do not do anything for God in our own strength. We are enabled by him. If we're going to be something for God, if we're going to be useful for God, if we're going to be used for God in the furtherance of the gospel, then we must rely on him.

Now, I want to be kind when I say this, and that only makes people sit up because you think I'm going to be unkind, but I'm going to be kind when I say this. Quite often, you hear people, especially, you know, Christians who are talking about something that they're going to do for the Lord, and again, there's a verse that should come to mind as I say this, and in their conversation, they never mention the Lord once.

They talk about the places they're going to go, the things that they're going to do, the results that they're going to see, but they never mention the Lord once. Either the fact that he has called them, and that he is leading them to do something, or that he is enabling them to do something, it's all about what they are doing.

Now, as I say, I say that kindly, because we can all be in that situation where we say something, and because we haven't qualified it, then, you know, we could be, you know, I could be speaking to myself in that situation, but you understand what I'm saying there.

There are people who want to go out in their own strength and do things, and I think when we come to Scripture, Scripture clearly teaches us that if we're going to be something for God, then we have to do it in his strength, and the strength that was offered to Timothy through the Lord's grace is also offered to us.

[10 : 51] It's the same source of grace that is available to us as well. Now, not only is Timothy to be strengthened himself, but he is to provide the spiritual strengthening to others.

You know, if we look in verse 2, we see there that he has been charged with this responsibility to communicate to others the inspired teachings that he has received from the apostle.

Now, as I said at the start there, you know, I think we can read this letter, and we can assume that Paul is somewhat anticipating his own death. He's taking a stand back, and he's looking at that bigger picture.

I think it's also, you know, a theme in this book, 2 Timothy. It's just taking that stand back and looking at that big picture. You know, it's easy for us just to be consumed.

I'm consumed like this, and, you know, I must admit I don't have a will. Now, you think that you should have a will, certainly if you have any assets, and if you've got any offspring, then, you know, that would be the logical thing to do.

[11 : 51] But, well, I haven't one of my own. If you go in the file cabinet, you'll find a big folder of different things that people have given us, either Rachel or myself or jointly. A number of people who have given us, asked us to either be their power attorney or to be the executor of their wills.

But what they've done is they've taken a step back, and they've realized that they're not here forever, that at some point that they're going to be called home, they're going to leave this earth, and that their affairs should be in order.

And they've asked us, they've entrusted us to carry that out. And that is just in the reflection that when you're young, you don't really think about this. It's normally when you get older, you think of all the coulda, shoulda, woulda, and you put your will in order at that point, and you tell your family what it is, and you've reflected on where you are in life.

Now, I think Paul has slightly done that in here as he's writing this. He's anticipating that he will go to be with the Lord soon, and he is writing this letter to Timothy, and I think there's various verses that we could pull out that would maybe confirm that.

But, you know, he's faithfully taught Timothy in the presence of many witnesses. You come into verse two, and it says this, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses is entrusted faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

[13 : 08] You know, not only is Paul looking at his own life and going, actually, my days on this earth are numbered, and I want to ensure that the message that has been entrusted to Paul is passed over to Timothy, but his life too is short, and his service for the Lord will be shorter, and he should also order his ministry in the same way, so that others could be prepared to carry out the teaching that Paul has entrusted to Timothy, and that Timothy will entrust to others.

Now, not that we're going to spend a huge amount of time on this. I don't necessarily, in fact, I believe this to be the case. I don't think this is teaching us about any kind of apostolic succession. I don't think that we envisage that in the New Testament.

I also don't think it necessarily correlates with anything that you see in other churches where there's an installation and an ordination of a minister or anything like that. I think this teaching that we have here in 2 Timothy 2 is just simply God's instructions for how the church is going to ensure that there's a succession of competent teachers, and it starts here from Paul to Timothy, and then it goes forward.

You know, Craig's points from the first week, and JT iterated them last week as well, around these three ways that that was going to happen. One was in evangelism.

There's also in discipleship, and there's also in training. You know, I don't think that Timothy is writing, sorry, Paul is writing to Timothy who's envisaging that this is only going to be taught to elders because you see that, that it's in the presence of men and witnesses.

[14 : 42] Nor do I think that this has only been taught to those who will be teachers. This has been taught to the church as a whole, and in the way that Paul has taught Timothy in the presence of men and witnesses, then Timothy will go and do likewise.

You know, it's nothing that should be done in secret or behind closed doors. You know, I believe that the teaching is for everyone, even though not everyone will become a teacher, as we see in the qualifications in Timothy, and also as is mentioned in James.

But we see here that Paul is entrusted something to Timothy, who's then going to entrust it to others, and we see here a picture of a steward. Now, it's not explicit in here, but there are four pictures we're going to look at.

The steward, the soldier, the farmer, the athlete and the farmer. The steward is not necessarily mentioned explicitly, but he is in here. Something that has been deposited to Timothy that he is going to take care of, and he is going to then pass on to others.

Now, I think that is a fairly normal concept. The things that, in life with us, the things that I've acquired, put into a will, I'll ask for it to be distributed to whoever, and on and on it goes.

[15 : 58] And you see there the legacies in Britain and elsewhere, where faithful generations have stewarded a possession. Now, it normally comes to ruin over somebody who's very self-indulgent.

Not only did we see that in the kings, but if you even look in our day and age, and Scotland is littered with castles and houses that were in custody of families for generations and generations, and then somebody was self-indulgent, and they lost it.

But Paul is writing to Timothy, and he is pointing out that there's four generations here, so unlike the three generations and these French kings, there's four generations here, so it's neat the fact that there's four rather than three.

But you first get Paul, so Paul is the first generation there. He's anticipating that he has passed it on to Timothy and the many witnesses. They, in turn, are going to pass it on to faithful men who, in turn, are going to pass it on to others.

And as I say, this is all done in the strength that is provided by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. You know, I think the Bible emphasizes the importance of an every-member evangelism.

[17 : 07] We had a young couple over for lunch recently, and I had mentioned wryly this priesthood of all believers. If you've been brought up in a church like I was brought up in, then that would have been a common phrase.

It normally goes over the head of most because it's a slightly old-fashioned phrase, but what we would say in Brunsfield is an every-member ministry or an every-member evangelism. You know, the job of evangelizing is not just for the pastor or for elders or for church staff.

It is for us all. Now, obviously, if these people aren't evangelizing, then there's serious questions that should be asked, but it is something for us all to do. It's what the Bible teaches. It's what's envisaged.

It's what we believe here at Brunsfield is that there is a part to play for everybody, and everybody should play their part. Now, we were in a growth group, and if you're in my growth group, then you'll remember this, but Aaron is one of our members in a growth group, and he challenged us one night, and he said, you know, if we all spoke to one person, and I'll get my maths wrong because I'm not a mathematician, but he said, if we all spoke to one person once a month, there's 12 times over the year, say there was 12 people there, there's 144 gospel conversations that could take place just from our conversation that night.

You know, I think if each of us done our part in sharing the gospel, then just think of what the result would be even in one generation. Paul is writing to Timothy, and he's anticipating four generations, but just think what would be done if we each took our responsibility seriously and passed on the message of the gospel, passed on the message that we find in the Bible, and just think of what the result could be.

[18 : 48] Now, it has to be done in the strength that enables us to do so, which is in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We also understand that there are things that obstruct us and distract us, and, you know, namely the flesh, the world and the devil, these things come in and they want to disrupt the work of the gospel.

But I think if we were just to take a step back like Paul has and just reflect on our lives, I wonder if we would really say that we've done what we could have done, or maybe even we've done what we should have done in terms of telling others about the gospel.

You know, I think we could do a great deal better than the record so far in each of our lives, and I speak to myself in that regard as much as I speak to anyone else. Now, if you come back to the passage here, you'll see here that Timothy is to entrust the truth to faithful men.

That is men who are believers and men who are dependable themselves. Now, if I'm going to leave something, and this is interesting, if I'm going to leave something for Caleb, then I've got to have it first.

There's no point in writing a will if there's nothing in it. And I think this is a bit of a challenge for us because I think, and I see this in our industry, and I think maybe you'll smile if you can see this in your workplace or in other places.

[20 : 14] Some of us want to become people who pass things on before we have it for ourselves. You know, Paul has taken this treasure and he's given it to Timothy, and Timothy's understood it.

We're going to see this in verse 7. Timothy's meditated on it. He's understood it. He knows how it applies. He's then passed it on to dependable, faithful people who will then pass it on to other people.

You know, there's a, I don't know if anybody's ever heard of a songwriter called Ray Bolt. I'm thinking maybe Fiona may have. But there's a line in a song that he once sang.

It's a kind of 90s album or CD if you've had it at that point. And it said, I think I'll skip all the homework and still get an A on the test. And it kind of makes you smile. As a Christian writer, it kind of makes you smile.

But I think there's a danger that sometimes Christians sometimes do that. They've hardly understood the truth for themselves before they want to pass it on. You know, that's not to, and you'll see this in Paul writes to Timothy, you know, nobody should prejudice him because he is young.

[21 : 16] That is not what's taught in here. But there is an expectation that we have received, we've understood, it's put into practice, and it is then shared.

You know, it's one of the qualifications, and this is not written to elders, but it is one of the qualifications for elders, that they are able to teach, and that we can observe the manner of their life. That is that they have understood what the Bible says, they've put it into life, they order their own affairs and the affairs of their house well, and therefore you can observe it.

And in doing so, that you have a greater trust in what they're going to do and teach and preach, because you can observe it in their lives. And I think that that's something, just to challenge us in here, even though Paul is writing to Timothy and saying this is going to be a transmission that is going to go from you to others, to faithful men who are going to teach others, I think that's just a challenge for us in there, that we should get stuck in, that we should read the Bible, that we should know it, that we should love it, and that we should allow it to change our lives.

And without giving the alliteration, I've just told you what the four sessions are at our church weekend away next week. So you'll also have heard this expression that says that God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called.

And while this is not a verse in the Bible, I think it's a theme that we see running through the Bible. And you'll see it in many people, you know, you think of Aaron, Moses, you think of others who on the face of it aren't somebody that looks like they should be used by God, but God equips the people who he calls.

[22 : 48] And if we are going to find ourselves in 2 Timothy here, we don't have, like Moses, you know, we don't have to come up with the excuses that we're not, we can't speak, we can't, you know, we're not good at this or that or the next thing because what the Bible teaches is if we are going to be called by God to transmit the message that we've received to others, then he will equip us to do that.

Now, I just want to move on slightly and I'm just going to pull out a couple more examples here as we get into these other pictures that the Apostle Paul uses to just to try and illustrate some of the truth and some of the qualifications and some of the caveats that he's going to give to Timothy that is going to teach him of how he's going to do this.

So Paul is asking him to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He's then given him this commission or this charge to communicate what he has received to others and Paul is going to give him a little bit of three pictures of how he's going to do this.

Now, you come into chapter two and you'll see that there's a number of pictures that Paul uses. First of all, he's used that, my child, so he's used the son in verse one. We're going to think now about a soldier, which we see in verses three and four.

We think about an athlete in verse five and a farmer in verse six. And next week, I can't remember who's speaking next week, but next week when we look at the rest of the passage, we'll see there that there's other images that Paul uses.

[24 : 22] He goes on to elaborate on the soldier, but he also thinks about a worker and the vessel and the servant. And he's given Timothy these different pictures to help him to understand. You look in verse seven and it says this, think over what I say for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

The reason that we're given these pictures that we're going to depict different truths around how Timothy's going to carry out his work is just so that we can look on them and we can understand really what it is going to mean to take this word, this treasure that Paul has entrusted to Timothy and to entrust that to others from Timothy.

Now, Paul starts by using, in verse three, Paul starts by using this image of a soldier. And I don't think it's, I think you look through Paul's writings as a whole, different letters, and he uses the image of a soldier often.

I don't think that's surprising since he lived in a military state and he himself was in prison. And he describes in these verses the characteristics of a good soldier.

A good soldier of Jesus Christ. You know, Timothy should endure suffering and hardship in verse three, sharing the suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

[25 : 42] You know, you only need to look at 2 Corinthians and in chapter 11, and you'll see that list of that many hardships that Paul had to endure in his work for the Lord.

You know, when we think about the soldier, we're going to, it's describing a soldier who is on active duty. Now, I'm going to have to confess something. I did sign up for the military at some point.

I signed up for the signals and I was hoping to be a member of the 81st Signal Squadron, which is a territorial army, it's a weekend warrior, but it's a signals, right?

It's telecoms. And I thought this would be something that I would quite enjoy doing. You know, I enjoy getting out and getting a bit muddy at the weekends and stuff like that. And this would be a way to serve.

But unfortunately, that was not to be. And probably it turned out very wise in the end, but that wasn't something to be. But the picture here is about a soldier on active duty.

[26 : 37] Not somebody sitting at home, not a dad's army, not a weekend warrior, but somebody who is in the thick of it, somebody who is in combat. And when you picture that individual, especially if they're in combat or if they're in another country, you know, they don't entangle themselves with the affairs in the other country, do they?

You see these pictures on the news of those incredibly large camps all over the Middle East and other places where you see the British and Americans and other armies stationed.

And you see individuals who are not engaging and entangling themselves in the affairs of this life. Now, we come back to this, we come back to our passage here, and we're not necessarily in the same circumstances because our charge is to go and to take the message that we've been entrusted with and to pass it on to others.

So does that mean then that if we are going to be involved in the Lord's service that we're not to be involved in some secular activities? Well, I don't think the Bible teaches that at all. You know, you just have to look into Paul's life and you see that he was a tent maker.

In fact, he confirms that he provided for his own necessities. And you see there that there are many people who worked for the Lord and were involved in secular activities.

[27 : 57] Nor do I think it means that we should absent ourselves from some of the legitimate things that we have to do as parents or as children or as friends. There are legitimate aspects of life that we must be involved in.

We can't absent ourselves from that. I don't think it's what the Bible teaches. In fact, it doesn't. If you think of just the furtherance of the gospel and how that's been aided by people who have worked hard and who have given generously to the Lord's work and have seen the gospel being propagated right over the world.

You think of the missionaries that have left the shores of the UK and ended up right over the world and all of the mission bodies that are out there, the mission organizations, you think of some of the folks that we're involved in as well.

Now, that wouldn't happen unless it was those that were working secularly and earning a living and giving generous to the Lord. So the Lord doesn't envisage and Paul doesn't envisage as he's talking to Timothy here that we should just all become monks and hide ourselves away and devote ourselves to the work of the Lord or in that way.

It doesn't envisage that. But what it emphasizes is this and the emphasis is on the word entangles. You know, the soldier mustn't allow the ordinary affairs of life to become the main objects of his existence.

[29 : 14] And I think this is a big challenge for modern day Christians. The accolades of our employment, the material benefits that that brings, the car and the house and the holidays and all these other bits and pieces.

Sometimes that we make that the main focus of our existence rather than what Paul is teaching here. You know, we do have to work. We have to earn a living to provide for ourselves.

That's a biblical principle and provide for our families, which is a biblical principle. But it mustn't be the be all and end all. It mustn't be the main aim of our life. Rather, that we have to keep Christ and the furtherance of the gospel in a very prominent place in our life and these other things that are legitimate, they must be there in the background supporting.

Also in this picture of a soldier, we see there that he must keep himself in readiness for the orders of the one who enlisted us, enlisted him.

When he gets the orders from headquarters, then he must be ready to please him. You know, his desire is to please, the soldier's desire is to please the one who enlisted him.

[30 : 25] But for us as a Christian, then we can say that we have been enlisted by the Lord Jesus. And our love for him should encourage us to maintain a slightly lighter hold on the things of this world and that, as we have seen in Paul, taking that step back and if anybody's, as I say, if anybody's written a will, you take a step back and you realise that you're only here for a short time and that you are going to pass on this to somebody else in the future.

And the encouragement there as a soldier is that we would hold these things lightly rather than just amass them for ourselves. We then come on to the next verse and it says this, an athlete is not crowned until he competes according to the rules.

You know, the figure changes and this is where there's just a little bit of a different aspect that comes out in Paul's writing here. And this is an athlete that competes in games and it could be in any kind of sport.

I think normally when we think about athletes, we think of running the race. Paul writes about that in another area, but this could be in any kind of game. And they compete in order to receive a reward.

But in order to do so, they must obey the rules of the game. And so it is in Christian service. You know, how many times do we look at some Christians who have started out well and I think in the modern day where so much is videoed and shared online, we see this even more.

[31 : 52] People who start out strong, who make bold claims for the Lord and yet fall short of the finish line. You know, they become disqualified because they weren't able to maintain an obedience to God's word and a devotion to it.

And this charge has been given to Timothy to entrust it to faithfully, to entrust it to faithful men who will entrust it to other people. Some of it's become a popularity context.

Some of it's all about themselves. You'll know about it and some of us will smile as you'll probably remember at churches like this where it all became about the pastor. It all became about that leading brother.

It all became about the main man. And then when something happened, the whole church fell apart. And you don't need to look, I'm not thinking about Bruntsfield in this aspect, but you don't need to look too far from Bruntsfield to see that.

People who were very, very gifted and yet they didn't do what is outlined here in 2 Timothy. They didn't pass it on and they didn't pass it on with the qualification that the individual be strengthened by the grace as in Christ Jesus.

[32 : 58] That's why Louis XVI lost it all because he couldn't pass on that spirit that was there. So, as we're thinking about this athlete, what are the kind of rules in connection to Christian service that we should observe?

Well, you know, you don't have to look too far in Paul's writings to find a number of things that are the rules that says you've got to, an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

Well, first of all, you read about it in 1 Corinthians. Paul writes that a Christian must practice self-discipline. Well, any athlete that's going to compete is going to have to be self-disciplined.

I don't have the body of other people in this room and it's because I'm not self-disciplined. I don't go to the gym. I don't lift weights. There are some people here that do and they're in much better shape than I am. But if you're going to compete as an athlete, then you've got to be disciplined.

1 Corinthians 9, 27 tells us that. You come then to 2 Corinthians in chapter 10 and in verse 4 and it reminds us that we've got to fight with spiritual weapons, not carnal weapons.

[34 : 02] We don't fight in the same way that the world fights. Our fight is a spiritual fight and we therefore fight with spiritual weapons.

We're also encouraged to keep ourselves pure and you can think about the diet in that sense of an athlete. And lastly, we are also encouraged to be patient and I think if you're going to be an athlete, then results don't come overnight.

You've got to be patient if you're going to see results and these are just a few ideas that you'll see dotted about, certainly in Paul's letters that you'll see dotted about around some of the rules that you would have to keep if you're going to maintain this image of an athlete and if you're going to compete according to the rules and in return have that crown, that never-fading crown that will be given to us as we have thought about in verse 18 from the Lord on that day.

And then we come on to the farmer in verse 6. In fact, just one point that I want to make about the athlete is this, that there is no spare time Christians.

You know, it's easy to go to the gym once a week, you're never going to see gains. But there are no spare time Christians. It's a contradiction in terms, right? You know, if you are going to compete, if you're going to be that athlete, then it is that daily discipline that must happen.

[35 : 28] It's basically, if you look at some of these people and I've been thinking about, I was thinking about Andy Murray and the car on the way in, what his mother poured into him, there was a result that happened there. But his whole life, his every single fibre of his being was focused on his sport and to achieve the crown that that would bring.

Then we move on to verse 6 and this is the hard-working farmer who would partake, would first partake of the crops. You know, according to all the principles of righteousness, the one who labours to bring forth crops has a right to participate in them.

Now, I don't necessarily think that there's a self-indulgence in this way that means that you've just got this right to take out the part for yourself. I think scripture would teach us that we should give the Lord the first part.

But when we come on to the transmission, and I was thinking about this just as I left, but when we come on to the transmission of the word of God from one generation to the next to the next, and anybody who's preached will understand this.

As you study, as you read, as you start to understand what has been taught in the scripture, who understands it first? In fact, in all the reading that I've done over the last couple of weeks in preparation for this, there's an enormous amount that I have learned that I probably maybe knew some of it, I didn't know it all, and there's been connections to other places in scripture that I've been meditating on this that I've really understood.

[36 : 54] And I've said, ah, there's a version there that teaches me this, or this is some, you see, the same example that Paul writes to somebody else, to another church in another place. And in a sense, in the transmission of God's word, there is the sense that as we diligently sow, and as we plant, and as we water, then the farmer who does that, in a sense, he's already received that reward.

And, you know, I say this as I preach tonight, there's a lot that I have learned of this that I can't even convey in the half an hour that we've spent, I can't convey it to you. Some of that you will need to go and read and understand for yourself.

And I think that's kind of what's envisaged here, that hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share in the crops. Well, in the transmission of God's word, I think that is where that, I think that's where the example kind of comes out.

And then lastly, we get to verse 7. It says this, think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. You know, there's more to these illustrations than just a soldier and the brief illustration that we've given, or just an athlete or the farmer as we have just mentioned there.

You know, there's far deeper, there's a lot that you can glean as you just think about these things, as you meditate on them, as you see different passages and verses come together to build a picture of what God envisages the Christian worker to look like.

[38 : 18] You know, Timothy is exhorted to consider them and to meditate on them. And as he does so, Paul prays that the Lord will give him understanding in all things. You know, Timothy will realize that the Christian ministry does resemble warfare in a picture sense.

It does represent athletics. It does represent farming. You know, and in each of these responsibilities, each of these occupations has their own responsibilities, their own nuances, their own caveats.

But in each of these, they also bring their own reward. And as I say, Paul is stepping back and he's having a bigger picture. He's having a big look not only of his own life, but to those who will come after.

But if you even just read through 2 Timothy, you'll see that he takes a much bigger step back. And as you see in here, it says in verse 3, chapter 1, verse 3, I thank God whom I serve as did my ancestors.

You'll then realize as you work through that there is a wide lens on the eternal history that Paul is looking at. And then as we come into verse 18 at the end of chapter 1 there, it says this, May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day.

[39 : 36] And he's writing about Onesiphorus who was looking for him when those who had all deserted them in Asia.

And he is looking for him. It says he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. But when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me earnestly and he found me.

And Paul's thinking about the reward that he will have on that day. So Paul is taking this big step back and he's realizing that he only has this tiny part to play in history. And it's an incredible part to play in history because it gives us what we have today in our scripture.

You think it's just what Paul's legacy is that he has left for us in this book that we have and that we so dearly treasure and cherish.

Well, my encouragement tonight is that we should read it, we should understand it, we should obey it, we should love it, we should allow it to change our lives. And it says this, think over what I say for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

[40 : 41] You know, I don't necessarily, I think God calls, God equips those who he calls, but he doesn't just give special understanding to those who teach. You know, we have a particular responsibility to be able to teach it in a way that you can understand it and you can put it into practice and that it can transform our lives.

But each and every one of us has a responsibility to get to know the Word of God and to understand it and to put it into practice and where possible to share it with others and to compete in the ways that we have thought about as an athlete or in the ways that we have thought about a soldier or as a farmer.

Now, the last slide I wanted to share just before we finish. So the verse I quoted earlier that said, you know, we rest on thee our shield and our defender, we go not forth alone against the foe, strong in thy strength, safe in thy keeping tender, we rest on thee and in thy name we go.

The verse 3 says this, we go in faith, our own great weakness feeling and needing more each day thy grace to know, yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing, we rest on thee and in thy name we go.

Thank you for listening. Thank you for listening, Thank you.