

God's provision, vocation and protection (2 Timothy 1:1-18)

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Date: 20 July 2025

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[0 : 00] 2 Timothy chapter 1. This is the word of the Lord. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

! Timothy, my dear son, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience.

As night and day, I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I've been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother, Lois, and in your mother, Eunice.

And I'm persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.

So don't be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me, his prisoner. But, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life.

[1 : 23] Not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering, as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed.

And I'm convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phagellus and Homogenes.

May the Lord show mercy to the household of Anisiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

[2 : 40] On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day. You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

This is the word of the Lord. Let's hear now from Pastor Albert. Thank you. This comes to near the end of Paul's life.

Just tell others how good your Englishes are. Is there any difference between the word complete and finish?

Have you watched that little clip on Facebook last week? It's saying that there's a difference between complete and finish.

Anybody watch that? Okay, good. Have you watched it, Vincent? All right. So he illustrated that like in a marriage, all right? If you married a good wife, you're complete.

[3 : 52] You agree with that? Anybody like married here? Are you complete? And he said if you married a bad wife, you're finished. Now be careful what you, you know, how you say to your wife.

Otherwise, you could be finished. But if you married a bad wife who spends all your money for shopping, you're completely finished.

I didn't say that. It was this guy actually was on the video. But with that, I actually, it really got me to think.

You know, the Bible uses this illustration that's marital relationship with me and Jesus. Jesus is always faithful.

He's always a good one. It's me that's unfaithful, right? So if I'm being a good spouse with Jesus, he's the faithful husband, then I'm complete too.

[4 : 59] But if I wander away and if I, you know, at times I desert him, it's me that's finished.

So Paul, in his last journey of life, when he was writing the last words to Timothy, words like, oh, I fought a good fight.

I've ran the race, you know. And he knew, he knew his life was complete. There's nothing arrogant about it, but he was honest to his spiritual son, Timothy.

I wonder if, for young people, it's a long way before I die, you know, but you never know, I tell you what. You know, you never know when you step out of this church and somehow something will hit you and you could just be face to face with Jesus tonight.

But we don't ever know, right? So, but I just wonder, when we come to see Jesus, do we actually have that confidence? All right?

[6 : 11] So, the passage we just read, that actually the second letter of Paul to Timothy. And the second letter, between the first and second, there's something that has changed.

Some circumstances has changed. All right? This first 18 verses is actually Paul was expressing his heartfelt reminders to his spiritual son, Timothy.

Hold fast to the things that has been entrusted to you, just like what I have done. You know, before, I mean, the last words of somebody when he died, it's got to be honest, got to be important, got to be very, very passionate, the very important thing I would pass on to my loved ones.

I remember this past week, if you haven't heard, it was this pastor called John MacArthur. Anybody heard about this guy? A very godly servant.

Although I may not agree everything with his theology, but he's certainly 86 years old, certainly a very loyal, faithful servant of God.

[7 : 26] I read a few of his books. It blessed me. All right? And just before he died, he knew, he said, this is going to be my last lap. A few weeks ago, when he actually knew he was going to die.

He said, this is going to be my last lap. It's like running 5,000 meters, 48 rounds. And he said, this is going to be my last lap. And I knew, I'm going to see the Lord.

And his last words to his people, to his church, he said, I'm so thankful, grateful for the ministry that God has given to me.

And he encouraged everybody that hears his message. He said, I'll encourage you to run the good race.

That really echoed what Paul will be saying in chapter 4. I actually preached that this morning. Right? So I think last words are very important.

[8 : 24] Okay? And I believe, even though Paul was saying that to Timothy, I believe God is through these words will encourage us to hold on to God.

Hold on to God. In all circumstances, no matter what. I don't know what's going through in your stage of life at the moment.

Right? But nothing can separate us from the love of God. Remember the youth, the camp, the verse? Nothing, absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Because the love is not from me. The love is from God. And he is totally dependable. So as I said, this is the last bit of Paul's life.

All right? We've spent the last week, last month or so speaking 1 Timothy. Now in the 2 Timothy. I mean, it was between 1 Timothy was Titus.

[9 : 24] But between 1 Timothy and 2, something has changed. He was in prison indeed. But something has changed and he knew. He was very near to death.

Okay? And he said, yeah, I mean, he said, I'm about to die. Okay? In chapter 4, verse 6, my time of my departure is near.

That was, a lot of scholars say that that was the Mamertine prison that Paul was in before he died. It was more, it was not just a prison.

It was really like a pit. A dungeon. All right? It was a hole dug into the ground. It's two layers. He was in the bottom layer.

And the food, anything, water was kind of dropped down from the ground into. You know, can you imagine in Europe how cold and miserable it will be?

[10:29] And he was there. And he knew that this would be his last lap. And when he wrote these letters, it was full of sentiment, full of passion, but somehow nothing bitter about it.

And this is the quality of life that we can have in Christ. We do not need to depend on the outward circumstances.

We can have that power and the assurance that we can have in Christ. So the structure of 2 Timothy, the next month or so we're going to speak, is quite simple.

Okay? The first chapter to the chapter 2, verse 13, is Paul to encourage Timothy, accept, face up to the calling that God has had for you.

And the second chapter to the fourth chapter was dealing with some corrupt teachers. And chapter 4 to the last, to the end bit, it was just more encouragement and conclusion.

[11:50] So I believe the speakers in the next month will address these different chapters and themes. Okay? So I want to share with this three, yeah, three things today with you.

And the 18 verses that we had just read. God's generous provision and glorious vocation and gracious protection.

It's all from God. It's not much. If I can try my best, but if it was not God, I can't achieve anything. So Paul knew that.

Right? He knew that the reason he could serve because God has provided for him. And the reason he could serve because God has called him.

Vocation is calling. And he could serve all these years until now because God has protected him. So let's look at it one by one.

[12:57] The first seven verses and the last bit, verses 16 to 18, it was all describing all these things that God has provided for us, for Paul, for Timothy in ministry.

Verses 1 to 4. Paul was being Timothy's spiritual dad. Like Ringo has said, he had a spiritual mentor, Pastor Kuhl, right?

And it's so precious to have somebody who you can look up to. Titus was also his spiritual son. So just remember, you know, in our lives, there are uncles and aunties and maybe pastors, there may be leaders who actually have blessed us, taught us, walked with us, accepted us, our good and our bad, our successes and failures.

It's so blessed. And in Acts chapter 13, 14, that's when Paul had met Timothy. And he had a Greek father, but he also had a very devout grandmother and mother.

[14:24] So that, in verse 5, that was his spiritual legacy came from the family. He did not only have Paul as a spiritual father, he also had a very godly spiritual family legacy.

And we are thankful for many of us here, we're second generation, third generation Christians. Praise the Lord. I did not come from that.

My mom was worshipping Chinese gods, all right? And somehow the Lord has intervened into our lives. And I was saved when I was about 13, 14, but I backslided.

And I came back when I was about 20. That was all God's work, okay? But for many of us here, you know, you're second and third generation Christians.

Praise God. It's so blessed to have this spiritual legacy from our families. And in verse 6, the church recognition.

[15:24] Paul reminded that, look, I laid hands on you and prayed for you so that God could impart some spiritual gifts unto you.

Surely, it's not a private, it would not be a private laying of hands. What's the point of just laying on hands for you, right? So, I believe it was more a church, a corporate sense was with other leaders, but Paul was praying.

And the church recognized Timothy as a young leader to serve. And eventually, he became the pastor of this big church in Ephesus.

This influential, this is complicated. And that's why Timothy felt, oh, it's so difficult. Right?

God calls. If it's easy, God would not want to call you. If we feel that it's difficult, we need to depend on God. That's how God will work and equip us and empower us.

[16:34] We do not rely upon our own strengths. And in verse 16 to 18, he mentioned there was two Onesiphorus who took care of him.

And also in chapter 4, Luke, and at the end of chapter 4, there was many others who actually served with him. Fellow yoke bearers. Serving together.

Paul did not go by himself. He had a team of people supporting one another, helping one another, praying for one another.

And eventually, and most importantly in verse 7, the power of God. So, it's not us, one man band, doing it all by ourselves.

God has prepared us even when we were young. In our age, in your age, when you are young, praise God. He is preparing you for something greater and better in the future.

[17 : 40] Right? So, take hold of all the opportunities that God gives to us. You never know how God will use you.

Spiritual legacy. And your family. Praise God for that. And church. Even, it was so good to see every year in youth camp, every year God provides younger and younger leaders to come up to serve.

Yes, you're not perfect. That's fine. We're never perfect. But God can use all these experiences. And their team, their people who serve with us.

Praise God for younger and older and people, peers of our same age that we can serve together. We can laugh together. We can cry together.

Praise God. But ultimately, we depend, rely on the power of God. All these are generous provisions of God.

[18 : 45] As I recall my youth, I did not have all that. I envy you guys. You know, you grow up in church. You have families. You have friends.

You have brothers and sisters walking alongside, journeying on together. Praise God. Give thanks for these. Right? Give thanks for them.

Take hold. All right? And secondly, glorious vocation. There was 2.1 in verse 8 and 12.

It's only in this chapter, even just this chapter alone, Paul said twice. Actually, in the whole of 2 Timothy, he said about four to five times, Do not be ashamed.

I am not ashamed. No cause to be ashamed. That means others look at him, oh, you look so ashamed. Others feel ashamed, shameful for Paul.

[19 : 42] Why? Because Paul was in prison. He was in a miserable state. He was not the poor who actually went about to different cities, was arguing, was dialogue with other peoples and other religions, championed over the gospel with other people, signs and wonders.

He was not the same Paul. Paul. Now he's in prison. He's about to die. He was old. He was bold. And people feel, oh, look at you, Paul.

I feel so pity on you. And I, and the people felt so ashamed of him, they left. And there are times like that.

But Paul said, look, Timothy, if others feel ashamed, you do not need to be ashamed. You, my spiritual son, I am telling you, you do have no cause to be ashamed.

Because why? Because we suffer with Christ. We do not just triumph. We do not just triumph, have victories with Christ.

[21 : 02] But we also suffer with Christ. That is the reality of our calling. Right? Be prepared to suffer.

If we never, I mean, okay, in New Zealand we don't suffer as much. But it's not too far away. All right? Now, we have a lot of brothers and sisters in Indonesia, in Bali at the moment.

All right? Okay. It's okay to join, going to join in the wedding. But you got to live there and profess yourself as a Christian. You might be persecuted.

All right? It's not too far away. And in New Zealand, we don't know. A decade, two decades later, we might be persecuted for our faith here in this land.

When I first came to New Zealand in 1973, we were singing hymns in schools. You can't do it now. Well, things changed.

[22 : 05] So we better be prepared to suffer for Christ. Recently, the Catholic Church has elected Pope, the new Pope, right?

And those cardinals, if you remember actually when you watch the TV, the cardinals, they were all wearing red. And do you know why it was red?

This picture shows something. Because in the earlier days, in the first few centuries, when the church was being persecuted for about 300 years, right?

312 years to be exact. Those bishops and the local Christian leaders. Because when you want to arrest, of course you arrest the leaders.

You arrest the leaders and others will be dispersed. So all these bishops and local leaders, when they were arrested and eventually being martyred, one of the ways being martyred was put them in the Colosseum.

[23 : 15] And wrestling with the wild beasts. All right? So then, this picture was one of the early church fathers called Ignatius. All right? How would you wrestle with wild beasts?

No weapons, nothing. All right? So you get ripped out, right? And all they were left, there were some bits and pieces of your clothes, rags.

And they were soaked with blood. So people, when they, afterwards, when they picked up the corpse, and there was nothing left really, shouldn't be anything left, that they had the rags of the clothes.

It was soaked in blood. It was red. So that was the tradition. You need to be, need to check. But that was one of the traditions that said, that's why the leaders, the church leaders, the cardinals, they were wearing reds.

To symbolize the martyrdom for Jesus. So are we willing to suffer? So being a Christian is not a trend or fashion.

[24 : 31] Yeah. I mean, everybody comes, all the young people, want to come to Jesus, to profess him as Lord and Savior. Yeah, I'll do that too. Count our costs.

And secondly, in the past 21 centuries, people willing to take up the cross to follow Jesus.

And that's a sober reminder for all Christians. And secondly, his vocation is his calling. We are called to co-suffer with Christ.

But also, this calling is from God. He said he has saved us and called us to a holy life. Not because what you and me have done.

But because he has a purpose in your and my life. And that purpose, obviously, is for our good.

[25 : 34] But more importantly, is for his kingdom and his purpose. He has called us. Not because I'm more virtuous or more holier than others.

He called you and called me with a purpose. So that we can serve. We can bless others in his kingdom.

I'm sure we all have this kind of experiences. In youth camps, Fran, Marco, and Grace shared.

I was very touched, actually, that morning. When you shared. And I was there. When you shared about those past experiences. I was in those experiences, too.

And I just realized that, yes. When you open up your lives to Christ. Things might not just start and, you know, appeal right away.

[26 : 38] But eventually, he will lead and guide so we can walk in this calling. Better things are to come.

That includes all of us. Even the very last week. Last week. Last week. The camp last week. I believe God worked in the hearts of the younger ones.

And I look forward to see what things will unfold in your lives. And for us older ones. Just do we remember maybe some occasions.

Some revival meetings. Some camp experiences. Some fellowship times that we had. And I think that somehow.

Or even in my private devotion. God spoke to us. And I responded. How is it going now?

[27 : 44] If we are serving according to our decision. Our responses to Christ. And we are doing it now. Praise God. Keep doing it. Praise God. But if.

If maybe. Oh. I kind of like. I promise God. But I sort of like. I withdrew myself. And I kind of. Hidden myself somewhere.

God will find us out. Promise. I promise you. He will find you out. Nowhere we can hide. I tried. But God.

Found me. So. It's a glorious vocation. It's so. It's so honor.

And so glorious. So. So. So. Amazing. That we can serve him. With the. Little things that I have. Imperfect. As I am.

[28 : 47] He can. Use you. And me. And lastly. Gracious. Protection. We have to. Full. Confidence. In God's.

Safekeeping. I really like. Verse two. Uh. Twelve. You know. It says like. Um. Uh. I know. I have. What. Whom I have believed. And I'm convinced.

That he's able to guard. What I have. Entrusted him. Until. Until. That day. Right. I can have. Full.

Confidence. Because. Because. He is. Able to. Guard. What I have. Entrusted. I. What I have. Deposited. Well. I have nothing. Deposited to him. But. My life. I can. Entrust my life to him. He will. He will. Protect. He will. Guard. But in verse 14. Same word.

[29 : 43] It's a. Word with a twist. In verse 14. Guard. The good deposit. That was. Entrusted to you. So it's not just. I entrusted my life to Jesus.

But. He entrusted something to me as well. It's a two way thing. God. I entrust my life to you. Fine. We can depend on him. But he. God said.

I have also entrusted something to you. So this. This. Entrusting. Is both ways. Of course. God. Can't do without me. He would. He would use angels. They can do. Miles. Better. Better. Than me. But. I counted. Such a blessing.

He. He would. Entrusted. This. His ministry. To me. So. I can have. Full confidence. In him. And.

[30 : 36] By. Serving him. Also. It's not. Yes. He had entrusted. To me. His ministry. But. I don't do it by myself. But by the.

Power. Gathered. With the help. Of the Holy Spirit. Who lives. In us. This little. Vessel.

It's like. Yeah. It's just like. What was that? What's that? Nah. He. In. In. In. First. And. Second. Corinthians. Four. And.

Jars of clay. Yeah. Just. Easily broken. But we. Have this. Treasure. The Holy Spirit. Whenever I think about that.

I'm so. Touched. He is here. I don't need to. Go about. Try to seek for some sages. Some. Some prophets.

[31 : 36] Or some. Whoever. Yes. There are some. Spiritual mentors around. Yes. There are some. Godly people around. But here. Right here. Is the Holy Spirit. I can.

Come. Anytime. When I struggle. When I. When I had doubts. When I. When I. When I. When I. Face. Difficulties. Even persecutions.

He is here. He is able to. Guard me. He is able to. Help me. To. To serve. To walk. To bear the cross.

For him. So. Let's. Take confidence.

Full confidence. So it's not just. Me. Doing this. Giving my best. Serving. But.

[32 : 33] It's a two way thing. All right. He has provided. He has provided. So graciously. For us. Up to now. And. And.

In the future. He will continue. To provide. Sufficient grace. As. As. My days. So be. My strength. We'll have. Full confidence. We'll have. No need to worry. Paul. At the end of his life. He testified. The goodness of God. Gracious provision.

Count our blessings. Spiritual mentors. Family heritages. Church. Peers. Brothers and sisters.

Fellow yoke bearers. The call of God. All these. Are such amazing gifts. Who. God has. Shaped us.

[33 : 30] Equipped us. To now. And we are. And we. By his grace. We're able to serve. Nothing to brag.

Nothing to boast. And. No matter what kind of. Difficulties and challenges. Or even dangers.

He is. Able to keep. Keep us from falling. I'm not dead yet.

I. I. I think. I don't know how long. I still have it. I cannot say my time of my. Departure is near. Not quite. Hopefully not. But I can testify to.

My life. To God. What. I have. Entrusted.

[34 : 26] To him. And God. The good deposit. That was entrusted. To me. Because. I have the Holy Spirit. In me. So. I cannot.

Have confidence. In myself. Because if I have. I will fail. But when I. Look upon. On Jesus. With the help. Of the Holy Spirit. I can.

Have confidence. I can do all things. Because the confidence. Is not in me. It's in him. This was me. I graduated. Actually. I graduated. My bachelor. In 89. So. 91. Now. If you. Some of you.

Recognize. That was. George. George. Wilson. We.

Very well. Respected. Pastor. He was my president. In. In the seminary. In Hong Kong. I was young. He was young. He was one of my.

[35 : 27] Mentors actually. Yeah. And. I had. I had no confidence. To serve. During my first year.

In. In serving. In the church. In Hong Kong. And I just. I don't know why. You know. I was serving in. That. Chow.

Church. Right. You speak some of the. Dialect. Right. Mom speaks to you. Right. But I'm not. Chiu Jiao. I'm not. Chau Jiao. Right. I'm not. Chiu Jiu. I'm Cantonese.

And. You know. Cantonese. And. Chiu Jiu. Chiu Jiu. Culture is very different. Very different. Right. And I was. And I was.

I had half of my life. In New Zealand. So I was like. Half. Kiwi. Half. Canton. And going to a different. Culture. People's group.

[36 : 22] All together. Oh man. I had. I. I. I faced so much. Problem. I made so much mistakes. All right. But through them. God was teaching me.

Telling me. I'm able to keep you. I will guard you. The first few years. Was horrible. Right. And. And. And.

I did not have mentors. At that time. Because. During. I started my ministry. 89. 89. If you're old enough to remember. Right. That's Tiananmen Square.

There's a lot of. Experienced pastor. Flat. Hong Kong. So we had no mentors. It was me. With my. With my.

With my. Co. Pastoring. Pastor. She was only two years ahead of me. In the seminary. So. We had no one to look up.

[37 : 19] Look up to. And there was. It was. Established church. It was. It just had his. Seventieth. Seventieth year. So the church already. Thirty five years. When I.

When I started ministering. So Pastor William. I feel what you feel. Right. Yeah. I mean. Man. It was. I was running. In all sorts of.

Problem. I don't know. I didn't know. I question myself. Whether. Should I leave Hong Kong. Should I come back to New Zealand. But there's no church in New Zealand. Wanted me at that time. It was not the timing. And then.

I had about. Eleven years in that church. And God has taught me a lot of stuff. Patience. To be more loving. To try to understand.

To be humble. Right. Until the time. God called us back. That was 2002. Our family.

[38 : 14] Carol was only about. Eight. At that time. And now. Twenty three years. Time really flew. All I can say.

It's. It's. It's. It's not me. Yet not I. But Christ. Lifted in me.

And we can. We can serve him. And we. We can. Love one another. As the family of God. So. To God.

Be all the glory. And I. I'm. I really. I'm really thankful. I just. I don't know. I just. I just love this church.

And thank you. Brothers and sisters. Who walked. With me. Thank you. Eva. Vincent. For. Being so patient. With me. I'm sure.

[39 : 15] In the first few years. I caused a lot of. Doubts. For you guys. Yes. But. Praise God. We can. Walk the journey together.

And let's. Let's. Continue to serve. In this. Blessed family. To God. Be all the glory. And honor. Let's pray. Thank you. Lord. As. No one. Not.

No single one of us. Are fitted. And. And qualified. To serve. But. In your gracious. Provision. And as. As your. Glorious. Vocation. And your. And your. And your. Yeah. And your protection. That we. Can be. Who we are.

[40 : 15] So Lord. May your word. Encourage us. Inspire us. Empower us. So that we.

In our. Respective. Roles. And positions. That we can. Bless. Your family. We can. Bless. One another.

And we can. Honor. Your name. In this. Place. Thank you. Jesus. In Jesus name.

We pray. Amen.