

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

2 TIMOTHY, TITUS, AND PHILEMON LESSON 1 (2 Timothy Chapters 1-2)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. In this lesson, we are going to be looking at Paul's second letter to Timothy. We're specifically going to be looking at chapters 1 and 2, and will be talking about characteristics of a faithful Christian, and what it means to be a faithful Christian. If you were to go out into the world today and ask the common person, "What do you believe it means to be a faithful Christian, and what are some characteristics that you see make a faithful Christian?" you might get a wide variety of answers. Some people may tell you that as long as you attend church services faithfully, that makes you a faithful Christian. Other people may tell you that as long as you claim that you believe in God, then that makes you a faithful Christian. Other people may say that as long as you are a good, moral person, that means that you are a faithful Christian. But what does the Bible say? When it comes to characteristics of a faithful Christian, what does the Bible say? We are about to find out, because that is what Paul is writing to Timothy about in 2 Timothy chapters 1 and 2.

The first characteristic of a faithful Christian is a pure conscience. A faithful Christian will have a pure conscience. Look at what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:3—"I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day." One of the things that Paul had, and that he was writing to Timothy about, was a pure conscience. It's a beautiful thing to know that if we are living a faithful Christian life, we do not have to worry about the things of this world. We don't have to worry about what other people have to worry about because we know from Matthew 6:33 that if we put Christ and the church first in everything we do, Christ promises that He will take care of all of our needs. That doesn't mean that He will take care of all of our wants. But we will not have to worry about the things of this world. We don't have to be looking behind our backs, seeing if anybody is watching the things we are doing, because what we are doing is right. What we are doing is according to the Scriptures.

In 1 Peter 3:21 Peter clearly teaches that it is baptism that saves us. When we come in contact with the watery grave of baptism, and we are baptized for the forgiveness of our sins, baptism saves us because, according to Revelation 1:5, it is at that point that we come in contact with the blood of Jesus Christ. Peter said that baptism is "an answer to a good conscience." When we are faithful Christians, we should have a good conscience. Look at the attitude found in Acts 24:16, where it talks about how we should always strive to have a good conscience. The Bible says, "I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." Paul said, "I always strive to make sure that I have a good conscience." We should never want to go against our conscience. Romans 13:5 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 speak about this. There may be things that we actually are authorized to do scripturally. We have the liberty or freedom to do those things. But if it goes against our conscience, we should not do that. A good example is this. Years back I heard of a woman who never played cards. She never got involved with playing cards. The peo-

ple who always played cards, and whom she knew, would never gamble. But because she associated card playing with gambling, it went against her conscience to play cards. There is nothing wrong with playing cards in of itself. If you just want to play a good game of cards, as long as you do not gamble or do anything sinful while you are doing that, there's nothing wrong with it. But if it went against the woman's conscience, then she should strive to have a good conscience and not participate in those things. On the other hand, we need to make sure that we are not making other people stumble (1 Cor. 8:1-13). If there is something that we are going to do that we know is going to cause someone else to stumble, then we shouldn't be doing that because we want to help one another get to Heaven, not hurt one another. With this being the case, if we are faithful Christians then we will have a good conscience. However, let's not get confused with this. Our conscience should not, and cannot, be our guide. If we are a faithful Christian, we will have a good conscience.

But just because we have a good conscience does not mean that we are a faithful Christian. We see examples of this in the Bible. In Acts 23:1 we see Paul saying that when he was a sinner in the world (before he became a Christian), he did all the things that he did "in good conscience." He said, "I had a good conscience while I was persecuting Christians. I 'thought' I was doing the right thing." Yet he should not have allowed his conscience to be his guide. In 2 Kings 5:1-19 we read of a man by the name of Naaman, who had leprosy. Naaman went to have his leprosy cleansed, and the commandment he received was this: "Go dip in the River Jordan seven times and your leprosy will be cleansed." He was frustrated because he said, "I 'thought' you were going to do something different." He said, "I 'thought' you were going to come out here and wave your hands" (or that something different was going to happen). Just because he "thought," or just because his conscience told him something different, did not mean that he was right. In Acts 8:20, when Simon the sorcerer sinned, Peter said, "You 'thought' that the gift of God could be purchased with money." While it is vital for us to understand that if we are a faithful Christian, we will have a good conscience, just because we have a good conscience does not make us a faithful Christian. We need to take note of that because many people today are letting their conscience be their guide. If we are faithful, we will have a good conscience.

The second characteristic about which Paul writes to Timothy is that if we are faithful, we will not be ashamed that we are Christians. Look at what Paul stated in 2 Timothy 1:8—"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God." Paul was a man who was not ashamed of the Gospel. How do we know that? We know from what he said to Timothy. But also in Romans 1:16 Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." Paul was not ashamed. And if we are a faithful Christian, we cannot be ashamed either. Humility and meekness are characteristics that are not necessarily discussed in these two chapters, yet they are things that are very important. But I believe that we sometimes have concentrated too much on humility in the wrong way—thinking that humility means that we lie down, roll over, and allow people to walk all over us so that we can never take a stand for anything. That is not what meekness or humility is. They are simply "power under control." We are powerful, but we make sure that we have control over that power. It does not mean that we allow people to do whatever they want to do, and that we never take a stand for anything. Some people today are ashamed, although they may never necessarily say that they are ashamed. But by their actions they show that they are ashamed. In John 12:42-43 we see a good example that shows how people believed in God, but who were not willing to confess Christ.

“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

Isn't that sad? These rulers believed in God. They believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. But because they were ashamed, scared, or did not want to be put out of the synagogue, they were not willing to confess Christ. Today people say that all you have to do is believe. There are many verses which show that to be untrue, such as James 2:19, which says, “Even the demons believe and tremble.” James 2:24-26 says that faith without works is dead. But there is a personal example of this in John 12:42-43. Here is a real-life example of people who did believe in God, but their belief alone did not save them because they were not willing to be fully obedient to God in everything that He demanded. Let us make sure that we are not following the examples of these rulers. Maybe we go to work. Maybe we go to school. Maybe we go to the grocery store. Or maybe we're just around our family. We believe in God, and we claim that we are not ashamed. But when we are with our friends, family, or people of the world, are we ashamed by our actions? Perhaps we are scared that if we stand up for the truth at work, we might lose our job. That is the same fear the rulers had. They said, “If we confess Christ, we'll be put out of the synagogue.” We cannot allow our fears lead us to that. We must have a godly fear—a fear that says, “I will not be ashamed of the Gospel.”

Look at Matthew 10:32-33. One of the most-comforting verses to me is Matthew 10:32 because Jesus said, “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.” That is one of the most-comforting verses in the Bible because Jesus is saying that if we will stand by Him and if we will do what the Word of God, then He will stand by us on the Day of Judgment. If there is anyone who I want on my side on the Day of Judgment, it is Jesus Christ! The next verse is the exact opposite of what verse 32 says. It is a very sad verse. It is a sobering verse because Jesus reminds us that if we deny Him before men, then He will deny us before His Father in Heaven. Think about this. If Jesus was to come back today, and if today was Judgment Day, and if Christ confessed you to His Father in the same way that you confess Him by your actions, would you be ready for the Judgment? Think about that for a minute, because if you are not willing to go to the Judgment with that kind of mindset, that means that you aren't really confessing Christ in the way that you live. That means that you are ashamed to stand up for the truth. In Matthew 10:32-33, do not misunderstand what we are saying. This is not simply just confessing Christ with the mouth. We know from Romans 10:10 that that is part of salvation, along with repentance and baptism. But Matthew 10:32-33 is talking more about a daily confession—the way that we confess Christ by how we live and the actions we take (that is, if we are obedient to Him). If we are not doing that, we need to make sure that we start. In Revelation 21:8 there is a lengthy list of sins. The first category of sin has to do with the cowardly. The cowardly will be lost in Hell for eternity. I believe that we concentrate a lot of times on those other sins (such as murder, lying, and being a thief), but how often do we talk about the cowards—those who may be good people, but who are too cowardly to stand up for the truth. Think about Peter. At one time he was a man who actually was not ashamed of the Gospel. He was not ashamed of Jesus Christ. Do you remember what Peter did when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus? Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. At that point, Peter was willing to die for Christ. Yet it was not too much longer after that when Peter denied Christ three times (Jn. 18:15-18). We know, based upon Peter's repentance, that he ended up being an elder in the church. But we need to learn from Peter that we need to be bold. We need to take a bold stand. Acts 4:29 and Ephesians 6:19-20 both talk about how we must be bold if we are going to be faithful. When you read through the New Testament as a whole, and you come across the

things that Paul wrote to Christians, you read about “the prayer of boldness.” Do we even need that prayer today? Are we praying for boldness? Do we even have a need today to be bold? Are we doing things where we would even want, need, or have to be bold? If not, then we need to repent. We need to change and begin once more to stand up for the Word of God.

The next characteristic of a faithful Christian is that he will be one who holds fast the pattern of sound words. In 2 Timothy 1:13 Paul told Timothy, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” If we are living a faithful Christian life, we will be one who holds fast to the pattern. There is a pattern in the Word of God, even though some people today deny it. Their attitude is that they can flip through the Bible, find a spot they like, and that is how they are supposed to live their lives for the day. But that is not what the Bible teaches. The Word of God says that there is a pattern. We must go by the pattern that God has set forth in His Word. In 1 Timothy 1:16, Philippians 3:17, and Titus 2:7 we find a discussion of how there is a pattern. We must go by that pattern. Moses went according to the pattern, according to Acts 7:44. In Hebrews 8:5 look at what it says about Moses’ following the pattern for the tabernacle. “Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” There has always been a pattern. God has not just told us to go out and live any way we want to live. God has always expected us to follow His commands and His pattern. Just as Moses followed the pattern that God set forth when it came to the tabernacle, think about the temple, too. Think about what David instructed Solomon on what the Lord wanted it came to building the temple, and how those people who rebuilt the temple always looked back to that pattern. They didn’t say, “Well, I’m going to add this, do this, or change things around a little bit.” They always went according to the pattern.

Today, according to the New Testament, we learn that we no longer are under the Old Law. Deuteronomy 5:1ff. says that the Old Law was for physical Israel. Today we are under the New Law. Under that New Law, if we are faithful Christians, then we are in the one church—the church of Christ. There is a pattern we must follow. John 12:48 says that we are going to be judged by the words of Jesus. We learn from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and from 1 Corinthians 4:6 that we must follow the Word of God as our pattern and guide. The Bible is our blueprint, so to speak. It is our blueprint when it comes to our moral life. It is our blueprint when it comes to worship. In John 4:24 the Bible says that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. People say, “God doesn’t care how we worship Him. We can worship Him as long as we feel good. As long as we’re bringing in people, that’s all that matters.” But that is not what Jesus said. Jesus said that we must worship God “in spirit and in truth.” Today people want to have women preachers, even though the Bible condemns it. Today people want to have mechanical instruments of worship, which the Bible condemns. There is no authority for that; there is authority only for singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). I’ve even heard of people who want to start having light shows or laser shows. But they have left the pattern set forth in the Word of God. If we are faithful Christians, one of the characteristics is that we will go by the pattern.

Another characteristic of a faithful Christian is that he will be one who teaches others. We will not be the type of person who says, “I’m saved. I’m a faithful Christian. So I don’t care about anyone else. As long as I’m good, I’m fine.” We need to have the attitude, “I want to teach others. I want to make sure that my children, my friends, my family, and everyone else knows about Christ.” Look at 2 Timothy 2:2—“The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

We must evangelize. Acts 8:1-4 talks about when the church was being persecuted, those who had not been committed to jail went everywhere teaching the Word. The more Christians were persecuted, the more they evangelized. Maybe today we need to be persecuted more. If we were persecuted more, then maybe we would understand the importance of teaching others and truly loving God. We know from Titus 2 that women must teach other women. We are responsible for teaching other people. If we do everything else according to the Bible, but we fail to evangelize, then we will be lost and will go to Hell because we are commanded to teach others. We must get back to caring about and loving people enough to tell them that they are lost and show them what the Bible has to say so that they can correct that.

Another characteristic is that if we are a faithful Christian, we will endure hardship. There's a worship song that says, "Soldiers of Christ arise, and put your armor on." The Christian life is described as that of a soldier. Look at 2 Timothy 2:3—"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." We must endure hardship as a good soldier. We are in the Lord's army, so to speak. We must be willing to endure hardship. If things come our way that we might not necessarily like, we must endure them for the cause of Christ. There's a false belief today which suggests that if you become a Christian, everything in your life will be perfect. You never will have to worry about anything else in your life. You'll never have to worry about trials or temptations because everything will be great. I don't know where people came up with such a view because when we go to the Bible we learn that the Christian life can be difficult. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus said that there will be few who will enter the kingdom of Heaven. The way is difficult and narrow. In 2 Timothy 3:12 Paul said that if we wish to live godly, we will suffer persecution. It is not a possibility. Rather, we **will** suffer persecution if we are faithful. The persecution that we face today is nowhere near what Christians in the New Testament faced. We might come to worship to Sunday morning and find that someone forgot to turn on the heater on a cold, wintery day. We complain and say, "We must be 'being persecuted' right now because it's cold in here." Or, when one little thing goes wrong, or we have to wake up early, or the preacher goes overtime on his lesson, we consider that persecution. But when we go to the Bible, we see that persecution is something that we today have not even begun to face. Look at Paul. In 2 Corinthians 11:22-28 we see him saying:

"Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."

Look at all the trials and tribulations that Paul endured. Paul had been beaten and stoned—and had almost died. He had been shipwrecked. There were times when he had no food or could not sleep. Then he sums it up by referring to "those other things that come upon me daily." When we start to compare ourselves to people in the New Testament, we can see that we really haven't started to face persecution. But we need to be willing to do so if the time ever comes.

The next characteristic of a faithful Christian is that he will be a person who competes according to the rules. In 2 Timothy 2:5 we read, "If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." When people come to the Bible, they

do not want the Bible to be a rulebook. They want it to be a “big love book” of mere suggestions. They say, “Well, I like what the Bible says. I’ll take some of it, but I’m going to leave what I don’t like.” It’s like a big buffet to them. If they like something, they’ll take it. And if they don’t, they’ll leave it behind. But the Word of God is our rule book. In Revelation 22:18-19 we learn that are not to add to or take away from the Word of God. People say, “I know that we’re supposed to compete according to the rules, but the Bible says that all we have to do is just love each other. As long as we love God and each other, then we will just fine.” What is the love of God? Look at 1 John 5:3, which explains what the love of God is. “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” What is the love of God? The love of God is that we keep His commandments. If we love God, we will manifest that through our actions and through our obedience to Him. The Bible says that we must compete according to the rules. Paul compares this to a race. What happens if you are playing basketball, and all of a sudden you decide to start fouling people? Could you win if you started doing that? Of course not. You couldn’t say, “I’m going to change the rule. I’m going to add my own rules.” You couldn’t do that. We can’t do that with the Word of God either. If we are going to compete, we must make sure that we are competing according to the rule book, which is the Word of God.

The last characteristic of a faithful Christian that I want us to consider is that we must be good students of the Word of God. We must study God’s Word. In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul said that we must be a good student of the Word of God. We must “rightfully divide” the word of truth. We must not add to or take away from it, but must rightfully divide it. From Acts 17:11 and 2 Peter 3:18 we realize that we must study the Word of God so that we can grow each and every day. If we are not growing and learning, then we cannot be faithful Christians. We are not doing what we must do to be faithful to God.

There are many other characteristics that are encompassed by being a faithful Christian. But I wanted us to look at these because they are vital. We must have all of these if we are going to be faithful Christians.

Now I want to talk briefly about how a person becomes a Christian. What did you do to become a Christian? If you said “the sinner’s prayer,” then no, according to Scripture, you are not a Christian. Isaiah 59:1-2 says that the Lord’s ear is turned from sinners. How do we become a Christian? We must hear what the Bible has to say (Rom. 10:17). We must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and believe what the Word of God says (Jn. 3:16). We then must repent of our sins (Acts 17:3). After we repent, we must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. We do not have to confess our sins to everyone. We do not say the sinner’s prayer. Rather, we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But at that time we are still lost because we have yet to come in contact with the blood of Christ through baptism in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). If you have not yet obeyed the truth, we pray today that you will do so by obeying the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 2 TIMOTHY, TITUS, AND PHILEMON (2 TIM. 1-2)

1. According to the content of this lesson, what is the overall theme of the material found in 2 Timothy 1-2?
2. According to 2 Timothy 1:3, what is one characteristic of a faithful Christian?
3. In Acts 24:16, what did the apostle Paul say that he personally worked hard to possess?
4. Does the fact that a person has a clean conscience necessarily mean that he or she is a faithful Christian?
5. In 2 Timothy 1:8, what characteristic of a faithful Christian did Paul point out to Timothy?
6. What group of people is discussed in John 12:42-43?
7. In John 12:42-43, what were the people mentioned in that verse afraid to do?
8. In John 12:42-43, why were the people mentioned there afraid to take a certain action?
9. In John 12:42-43, what did the people mentioned there love?
10. What did Jesus say in Matthew 10:32-33?
11. In John 18:15-18, what did Peter do that was contrary to the character he should have maintained as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
12. According to Acts 4:29, what attitude should Christians possess when it comes to teaching God's Word to others?
13. What, according to 2 Timothy 1:13, is another characteristic of a faithful Christian?
14. In Philippians 3:17, what did Paul urge Christians to do?
15. What does 1 Corinthians 4:6 teach Christians not to do?
16. According to 2 Timothy 2:2, what is another characteristic of a faithful Christian?
17. According to Acts 8:1-4, what did first-century Christians do, even when they were being persecuted because of their faith?
18. What, according to 2 Timothy 2:3, is another characteristic of a faithful Christian?
19. According to Christ's statements in Matthew 7:13-14, how many people will be successful in eventually getting to Heaven?
20. What did Paul say in 2 Timothy 3:12?
21. According to 2 Timothy 2:5, what is another characteristic of a faithful Christian?